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DUMPSTER DIVING

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Nic Hume photo

Former SUB business manager guilty of fraud

BY JOHN THOMPSON

Vivek Sharma, the former business manager of UVic's Student Union Building (SUB), pled guilty to two counts of fraud at a December court appearance. He will spend eight months under house arrest, followed by one year on parole, and pay $14,000 in restitution to the UVic Students' Society.

The trial gave some closure to the financial crisis brought to light in October 2001, when a routine audit revealed the students' society's budget was out by hundreds of thousands of dollars. Sharma had resigned from his job just weeks earlier to work for a Belgian beer company.

After a forensic audit and police investigation, a warrant for Sharma's arrest was released by Saanich Police one year later in October 2002. However, by then it was believed most of the unaccounted money was lost through building-wide mismanagement. For instance, the controls to measure alcohol levels inside Felicita's Pub had been disabled. When a company was later brought in to compare the remaining alcohol against what was sold, they found 15 to 20 per cent was missing. Since that time, money and inventory tracking systems inside the SUB have been overhauled.

On Wednesday, Dec. 17 inside the Victoria Provincial Courthouse, Sharma hung his head and stared at his hands, clasped together between his legs. In a last-minute plea bargain, he pled guilty to two fraud charges. Other charges of theft over $5,000 and causing a person to use a forged document were dropped.

Defence lawyer Adrienne Brooks outlined Sharma's accomplishments as business manager. "He raised the bar to levels not yet attained," Brooks said, listing pizza ovens, a photocopier and lighting inside Felicita's pub as donations by local businesses that Sharma arranged, as well as a discount with Bluebird cabs.

In early 2001, when Sharma advised he was looking for other employment, the students' society wrote him a letter that praised his creativity and expertise.

"He has had trouble explaining, to me and to himself, how it all happened," Brooks said. "He must have been caught up in his own ambition."

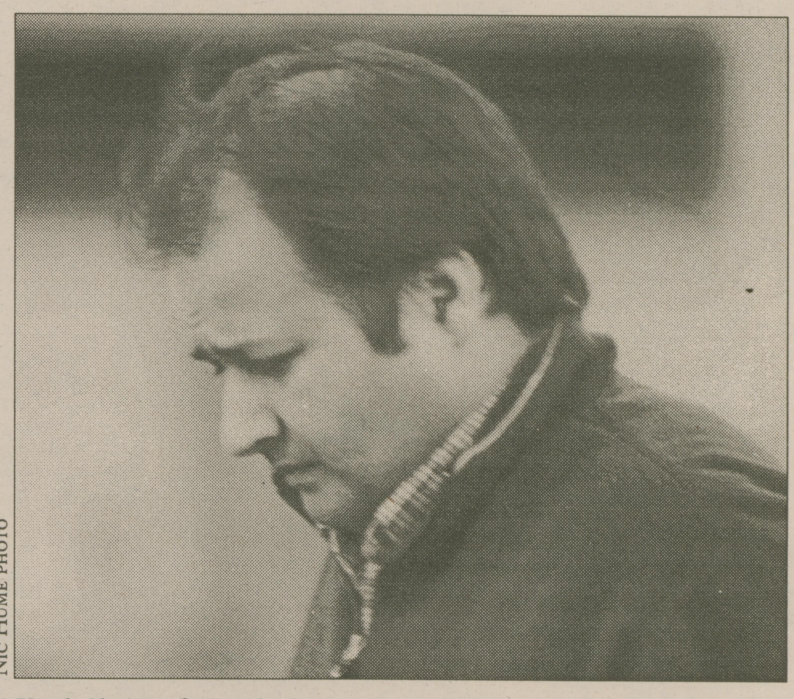
This ambition was Sharma's undoing, according to Crown lawyer Robin Baird. After assuring the students' society he could find a local business to sponsor patio furniture for the pub, Sharma approached Sleeman's brewery and told them he had already bought the furniture out of his own pocket. Not wanting to upset their relationship with a big client, Sleeman's went ahead and wrote Sharma a cheque. The students' society never saw the money.

Similarly, Sharma asked Sleeman's to sponsor the cash-point computer systems purchased for the used bookstore, SUBText. The technology was bought from a Halifax-based company, but Sharma used a friend's computer company in Victoria to produce an invoice to give the brewery.

"To persuade Sleeman's to hand over the funds, you had to meet in person, and I find that quite brazen," said judge Robert Higinbotham during his ruling. "You got your friend involved, and he didn't benefit. That's disgraceful in the extreme."

Sharma, who turns 30 this month, lives in Montreal and works for a small publicity firm. As he left the courthouse, he refused to comment to *the Martlet*.

"He got what was coming to him," said SUB general manager Marne Jensen. Jensen also said that while Sharma's conviction offered some comfort, more closure was offered by the society's $83,000 surplus last year. The students' society currently has a $1 million operating debt.



NIC HUME PHOTO

Vivek Sharma, former business manager of the Student Union Building, enters the Victoria Provincial Courthouse where he pled guilty to fraud.

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CUPE 4163 to go on strike Friday

Members include teaching assistants, language instructors and computing staff

by Bryna Hallam

The University of Victoria could be facing a strike as soon as Friday morning.

CUPE 4163, which includes teaching assistants (TAs), language instructors and computing staff, gave the university 72 hour strike notice Tuesday morning. They will be in position to strike on Friday, Jan. 9 at 9 a.m.

Negotiations between the union and the university fell apart when mediator Grant McArthur bowed out on Dec. 29.

"We asked the university to go to arbitration with us," said Sherwin Arnott, chair of the union's bargaining committee. "It was a last ditch effort to avoid job action."

The university rejected the union's proposal of binding arbitration, saying that it would take control of the results away from both the union and UVic. They proposed both sides return to mediation, where progress had been made on a number of issues.

UVic and the union have been in negotiations since August 2003. Unresolved bargaining issues include wages, tuition and parental and sick leave. UVic TAs make $17 per hour, far behind the $25 and $27 per hour TAs at UBC and SFU earn respectively.

"The university didn't want to offer us any sort of wage increase," said Melissa Moroz, communications director of CUPE 4163. "We haven't had a wage increase in a year and a half."

The university has offered $728,460 for a new fellowship fund–the Graduate Teaching Assistant Fellowship (GTAF)–for TAs. UVic says this offer represents the equivalent of a 21 per cent increase in compensation to TAs (15 per cent from new revenue, and 6 per cent through reallocations of existing expenditures).

"The offer's crap," said Moroz. "With UVic's $18 million surplus, TAs are feeling a bit left out."

The money for the GTAF comes from the already-existing Graduate Teaching and Research Fellowship (GTRF), money already set aside for graduate students. As well, the GTAF would be created outside of the contract.

"UVic must operate under the provincial government guidelines that allow no general wage increases in the public sector," said Jamie Cassels, Vice President Academic.

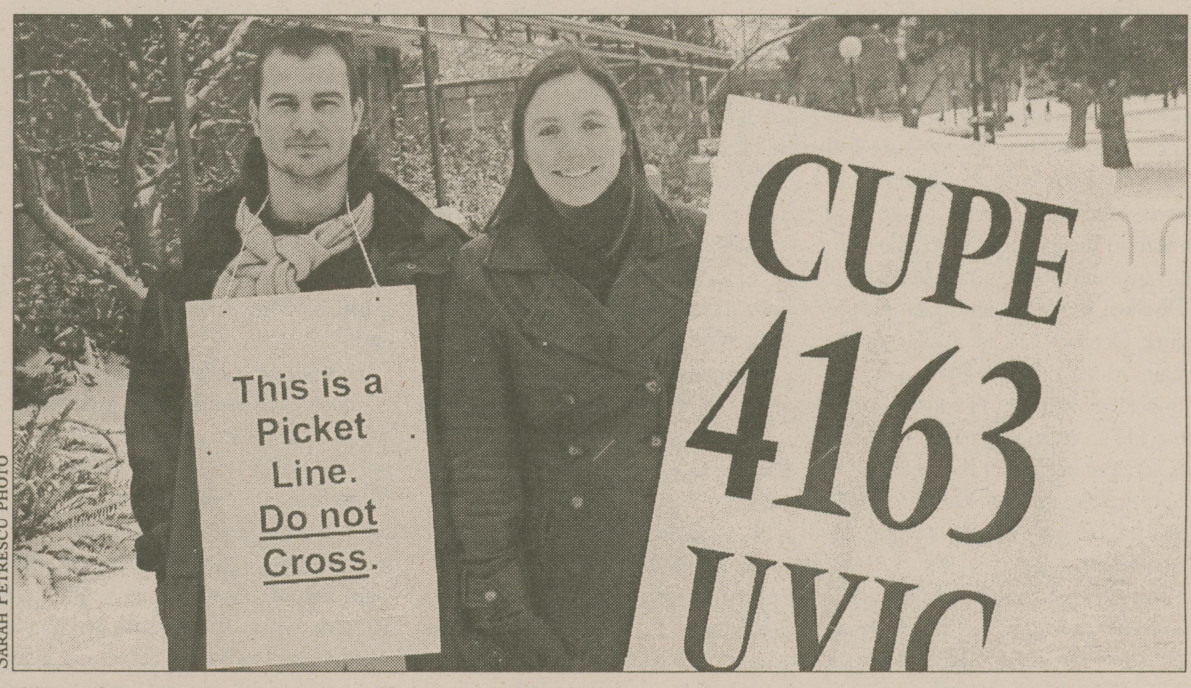
The GTAF is UVic's way of offering increased support for TAs without violating government guidelines.

According to Cassels, the only way to fund additional support for graduate students will be tuition increases for undergraduate and graduate students or program and service cuts.

Another concern for TAs is tuition. Tuition for graduate students has increased 70 per cent in the last two years, and is scheduled to go up again in May. Since paying tuition is a term of their employment, another increase will essentially make it so TAs are paying to teach.

The university's view is that tuition is simply a cost of attending post-secondary institutions, and not a term or condition of employment.

UVic also believes TA positions are a way of supporting graduate students financially. Twenty-two per cent of graduate students are TAs.



Sarah Petrescu photo

Chair of the CUPE 4163 bargaining committee Sherwin Arnott and communications director Melissa Moroz, preparing for a Friday strike.

Moroz believes this is also a quality of education issue. "I know PhD students who have left UVic to attend other schools," she said.

Arnott agrees. "We're not attracting the best and brightest students to UVic," he said. As a result, undergraduate students may suffer because TAs are responsible for one-third of the teaching on campus.

"A lot of people believe in the justice of our position," said Arnott. The Faculty Association recently passed a motion of support for wage parity between UVic TAs and their counterparts at UBC and SFU. The UVic Students' Society (UVSS) passed a similar motion in August.

Job action by the union would affect more than just the TAs. Other unionized workers from transit bus drivers to postal workers likely would not enter campus.

"Our members don't want to go on strike," said Moroz. "They don't want to stand on picket lines for weeks on end."

"The majority of people in the bargaining unit are students," added Arnott. "They're feeling frustrated and alienated."

The union is asking that students respect picket lines.

UVic administration said that the campus will remain open in the event of a strike, but that some classes taught by sessional instructors may be cancelled and that libraries, counseling services, health services, emergency financial aid and the administrative registrar's office will offer only limited services. Most support services will be unavailable. In addition, transit service and traffic may be disrupted.

Students who choose not to cross the picket lines will be responsible for fulfilling course requirements, and as far as possible will be evaluated on the basis of the work they are judged to be able to do under the circumstances. Students will be responsible for contacting their instructor and making alternate arrangements with them.

For updates on the strike and class cancellations, check the UVic homepage at www.uvic.ca.

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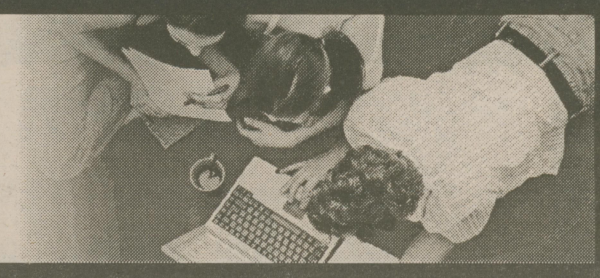

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April 1 welfare cutoff no joke to Victoria's homeless

BY STEFAN CURRIE-ROBERTS

Charles Walker straightens up, his intense glare hardening as he comes to the crux of his argument. "To feel that your back is against the wall, to have someone tell you to go and freeze to death doesn't feel like your government is supporting you."

Walker, homeless and unemployed since October, sits at a table in the main room of The Open Door, a drop-in centre for Victoria's homeless. He is one of 600 people who use its services daily, and he is angry. On April 1, like many others of B.C.'s poorest, he will become ineligible for income assistance.

The changes to the rules began with the passing of the Employment and Assistance Act (Bill 26) by the B.C. government in January 2002. The bill allows the cabinet to make changes to income assistance time limits retroactive to April 1, 2002. A rule was then put in place that cuts off income assistance to those dependent on it for a total of two years out of five.

This legislation has spurred criticism from groups like the British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW) and the city councillors of Victoria and Vancouver, who have requested that the government repeal the new laws. BCASW even formally censured the Minister of Human Resources Murray Coell, a former social worker, for "failing to adhere to the B.C. social workers code of ethics."

But the government has stayed their course. The 2002 speech from the throne blamed weak spending decisions by undisciplined governments for B.C.'s current debt, and claims difficult funding decisions must be made. Last year, Murray Coell said, "We are on track to meet that commitment to reduce the ministry budget from $1.8 billion to $1.4 billion." Since then, the government has committed to reducing the budget a further $200 million. Of this budget, currently $900 million goes to income assistance handouts.

Regaining intensity, Charles Walker says why he feels the cuts are unfair: "The government is going about it the wrong way. Start the cuts at the top."

But ministry spokesperson Mike Long insists that this is not a cost-cutting measure. "This is to encourage people to find work," he says, adding that B.C. leads the country in job creation and that thousands of jobs have been created since the initiatives have been announced.

Reverend Allen Tysick, director of The Open Door shelter, doesn't swallow the government's arguments about welfare dependency. "That's horseshit. If I went [into the shelter] and said there are jobs cleaning the streets of Victoria, 40 hands would go shooting up."

He adds that while jobs are available–the human resource department lists 10,000 jobs in its job banks–many are out of reach for the poor. "You see wanted ads all over the paper for carpenters and other trades," says Tysick. "But people on welfare generally aren't educated. The jobs are all in fields that they can't get."

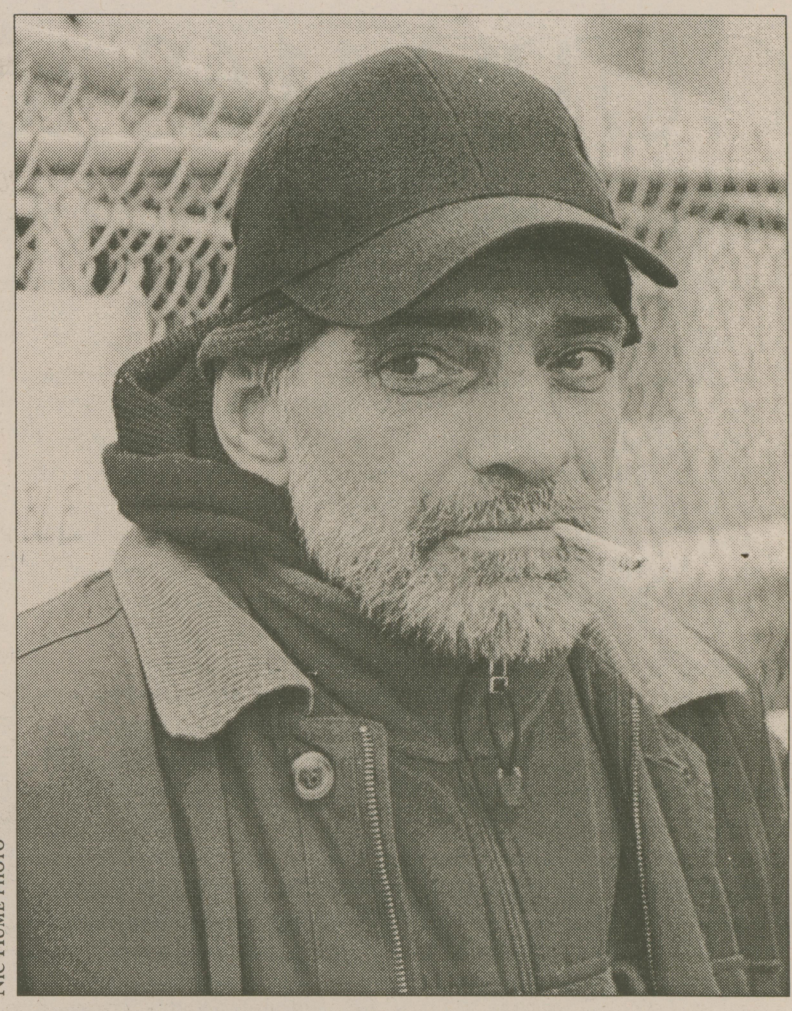
Charles Walker agrees, although he's indignant at the thought that he'd be affected. "I can survive. Others cannot. They're cutting off people's lifeline. People can't live on nothing," he says, his hazel eyes catching fire.

The government is banking that people won't have to live on nothing. They have pumped hundreds of millions into job creation and training programs, which they say have had great success in decreasing welfare caseloads.

But evidence of this success is "contradictory," says Marge Reitsma-Street, a professor of health and social sevices policy at the University of Victoria. In a recent paper on welfare limits, she compares plans in B.C. to a similar time-limit policy put in place by the American government in 1996, where she says it's true that welfare caseloads have decreased, but that rates of child poverty and imprisonment continue to be the highest in the industrialized world.

In response, Long says it's not fair to compare the two countries, although he wouldn't elaborate on their differences. "It wouldn't be fair to compare," he says. "The systems [in the US and Canada] are totally different."

Fears that homelessness, crime and poverty will rise are shared by many opposed to the cuts, but the government is confident it won't be a problem for those cut off. In legislative debates last April, Coell addressed opposition questions about the possibility of thousands of welfare recipients "hitting a wall" come April 1. "Two years is a long time," he said. "And it may not take a lot of people that long [to find employment]...just for the members' information, the time limits do not apply for persons with disabilities and their dependents, for persons who are 65 years or older."



NIC HUME PHOTO

Charles Walker, homeless since October, smokes outside the Silver Threads emergency shelter where he is volunteering. Walker believes that new welfare rules brought in by the B.C. Liberals will sever people's lifelines. "I will survive. Others cannot," he said.

The time limits have a list of 24 scenarios that exclude people from the welfare cutoff, which is one reason why the government is confident no one will be "left behind."

That confidence is what worries some. The government has provided no numbers about how many will be left off welfare come April 1. Victoria councillor Bea Holland expressed her fears in the *Times Colonist* in early December: "I don't know what's more frightening: the minister knows the numbers and won't tell us, or they don't know the numbers." Unofficial numbers estimate as many as 30,000 individuals will no longer receive welfare.

If the numbers are that high, Reitsma-Street also questions whether the exemptions are accurate. "Time limits on assistance foster contorted, complicated judgements about the deservedness of others for a time period," she writes.

Whether the people removed from income assistance are undeserving or not, Rev. Tysick expects there will be more people left out on the street. Around 80 people sleep on the streets of Victoria already, he says, and about two-thirds of the individuals who use The Open Door are on welfare. "I don't expect a major bombshell on April 1. Someone's brother or sister will put you up for a few weeks, or you'll stay at a shelter. It happens gradually, but we will be facing a serious situation six months from April 1."

And as to what will happen to those who are still unemployed and will be denied welfare after April 1, that is unsure. Long suggests they try employment programs. Tysick has a more grim outlook. "Human beings are survivors," he says. "Women and men will turn to prostitution, theft, or dumpster-diving to live."

Charles Walker gives an angry smile. "April Fool's Day. That's when the government will find out what it's really done to 28,000 people."

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News briefs

Groovefest needs help

Organizers of the Groovefest are calling out to the UVic community to make this year's show bigger, raunchier and more radical. "In the past few years Groovefest has been a bit smaller," said Danielle Gauld, one of the events organizers. "This year we want to go back to the roots of Groovefest and make it huge."

Groovefest is an annual fundraiser, put on by UVic's Women's Centre, to raise money for various organizations that advocate for women. The variety show is renowned in Victoria for bawdy performances, comedy, activist performers and as an outlet for diverse and alternative perspectives. This year, hip-hop diva Ndidi Cascade headlines the show. There will be the usual anti-fashion show and silent auction, but performers and volunteers are still needed.

"We're looking for people of all sizes, shapes, colours, abilities, genders and sexualities," said Gauld.

To perform or volunteer at Groovefest e-mail: groovefest@riseup.net

– Sarah Petrescu

Dropping the mitts with Martin

Ian Boyko, the national chairperson of Canadian Federation of Students, says his team is gearing up for a national day of action Feb. 4, and with a federal election looming in the spring, it's a great time, he says, to get policy debates in the public.

And now, Boyko might have the Young Liberals of Canada as an ally, when prime minister-designate Paul Martin seeks to solidify his regime.

Young Liberals president Ann Takagi says she wants to work with groups like the CFS and the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations to make post-secondary education an issue.

"I want to see something more tangible for students," she said.

– Adam Grachnik, CUP

Emergency shelter

Questions raised about lack of affordable housing

BY PATRICK WHITE

The Silver Threads building has become a warm reprieve from the biting cold of Victoria's streets for many of the city's homeless residents, but it is only a temporary solution to a large problem according to those huddled inside.

With temperatures in Victoria dipping to lows unseen in several years and more snow in the forecast, Alan Lowe announced Sunday, Jan. 4, the city would open a temporary relief shelter at the downtown Silver Threads building with assistance from the Cool-Aid Society. That night 38 people spent the night at the temporary facility on cots provided by the city's emergency program. More than 45 were expected to spend the night on Monday.

In a large room full of cots, sleeping bodies, donated clothing and a large pot of aromatic turkey soup, Cool-Aid Society social worker Lee Horner oversees the shelter's Monday afternoon operations. She hopes everyone living out in the cold makes their way inside. "I don't think anybody will be turned away," she said. "These people would be in doorways, lobbies, under bridges. In this weather they're really taking a big risk staying out there, especially if they are frail or ill. So we'll accommodate as many as we can possible hold."

Horner saw firsthand the cold taking a physical toll on those exposed to it. "I've seen some come in with frostbite and I've seen many hands and limbs cracked open from the cold," she said.

Horner said the ultimate solution protecting homeless Victorians from the cold is "more affordable housing. It's the only way that everyone can be properly looked after."

Barney, an occupant of the shelter, agreed. "The base rate that the government gives us for housing is $325. Just try to find something decent for $325 in Victoria. It's not going to happen. We need more affordable housing. I mean just look at that," Barney says, pointing to Angela, a visibly pregnant 20-year-old girl staying in the shelter. "She should be able to get a better place to have a kid than this."

For all his gripes, Barney praised the efforts that created the shelter and the continuing stream of clothing and food donations showing up at the door. "Support from the outside has been incredible, but it should be here year round," he said.

Charles Walker, a man on income assistance who came by the shelter to volunteer, said that its temporary existence is unfortunate. "This will only be here until the end of the week for sure. Beyond that nobody knows."

Walker also praised donors but said more clothing is urgently needed. "Gloves and socks go the fastest. As soon as they come in they are gone, so we can always use more."

Horner said it was those using the shelter and not those who created it that should be praised. "Most of the credit belongs to the people coming in here. It's been a team effort. Everybody here has gotten along. Everyone's assisted each other. They keep it clean and they help out one another."

NIC HUME PHOTO

Stinker gets some food and warmth at temporary shelter.

Dispatches from Cheeseville

BY BRYNA HALLAM

What's in a name? For Armstrong Cheese, not much more than a nod to the past.

Its owner, Saputo Inc., is closing the milk processing plant located in Armstrong, B.C.

As a result, Armstrong Cheese will no longer have any tie to the town where it was born. When the last remnants of Armstrong Cheese are removed from Armstrong in February, 73 workers will be out of jobs.

"These measures are part of Saputo's continual analysis of its activities and the implementation of measures aimed at improving its operational efficiency," said Claude Pinard, a company spokesperson. According to Saputo, the plant's production will be integrated into other company facilities.

Armstrong, a small town of approximately 4,500 in the Spallumcheen valley, was the home of Armstrong Cheese for nearly 100 years. Founded in 1902 by Dutch settlers, Armstrong Cheese had a history of being owned and operated by dairy farmers.

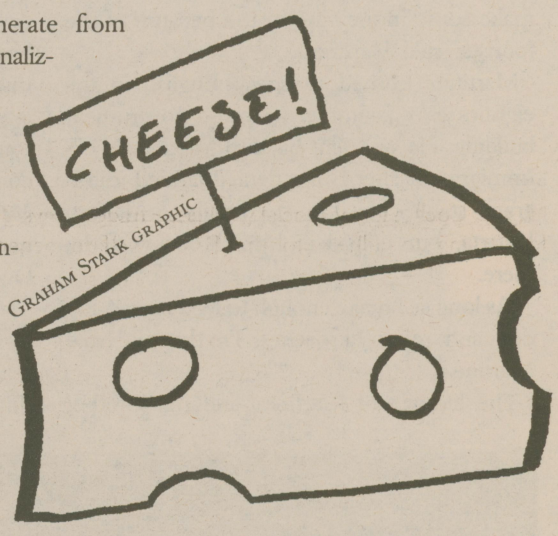
In 2000, Dairyworld Foods, Armstrong Cheese's parent company, was bought by Quebec-based Saputo Inc.

Soon after, cheese-making operations ceased in Armstrong and the old cheese factory was converted to a milk processing plant.

Cheese production moved to Abbotsford. Other plants that produce Armstrong Cheese are located in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

Residents of Armstrong are worried the plant closure will impact more than just the 73 workers at the plant.

"I'm very, very disappointed with the decision," said Armstrong mayor Jerry Oglow. "Once again you see a corporate conglomerate from central Canada rationalizing their fiscal bottom line at the expense of rural B.C., and that's disheartening."



There are also concerns that local dairy farmers will have to find a new dairy to process their milk.

In addition, Armstrong's tourism industry could suffer, as cheese has made the small town a destination for tourists.

Armstrong still maintains some ties to its cheese-making heritage.

The Village Cheese Company, founded in 1998, is a micro cheese plant that uses traditional production methods.

"We are pleased to be able to carry on the tradition of cheese-making in the fertile agriculture dairyland of the Northern Okanagan Valley," said Dwight Johnson, CEO of The Olde Cheese Factory.

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Canadian vacationers get the long end of the stick in Mexico

BY SARAH PETRESCU

Each winter holiday, thousands of Canadians fly south to Mexico in search of sun, fun and a relatively cheap vacation. What many vacationers do not realize, or purposely ignore, is that their holiday bargain may be at the expense of underpaid Mexican workers.

"Most of those people working in the all-inclusives [hotels] make about 10 U.S. dollars a day for an 11 hour day," said Sergio Martinez, who sells silver bracelets on the Malecon sea walk in Puerto Vallarta. Ten U.S. dollars a day is considered a good wage in a country where one-fifth of the population makes the minimum $3 US a day.

Martinez is a small and solid man in his fifties. He wears a traditional Mexican straw hat, raw cotton shirt and cut-off jeans to keep cool in the heat. His cheshire grin and sweat-glistened face make him look like an overgrown child. However, when the subject of working in the tourist-swarmed Vallarta comes up, his demeanor turns from teasing to somber.

"I'm not from here. I'm from Acapulco. But, I speak English so I know there's work here. Everybody knows if you learn English you can make some money in Vallarta because of the tourists," said Martinez.

Martinez learned to speak English in the eighties as a janitor in a Seattle government building. He was sent back to Mexico by US Immigration after being denied landed immigrant status. He has no family in Puerto Vallarta, but considers himself lucky to be there.

"As long as I make enough to feed myself, my dog and my cockroaches, I'm happy," said Martinez.

The lifestyle of Martinez and many other workers in Mexico's tourist cities would be considered impoverished by Canadian standards. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement, which took effect in 1994, the tourist industry has boomed in Mexico. Puerto Vallarta is the number one destination for Canadians vacationing in all-inclusive resorts and time shares.

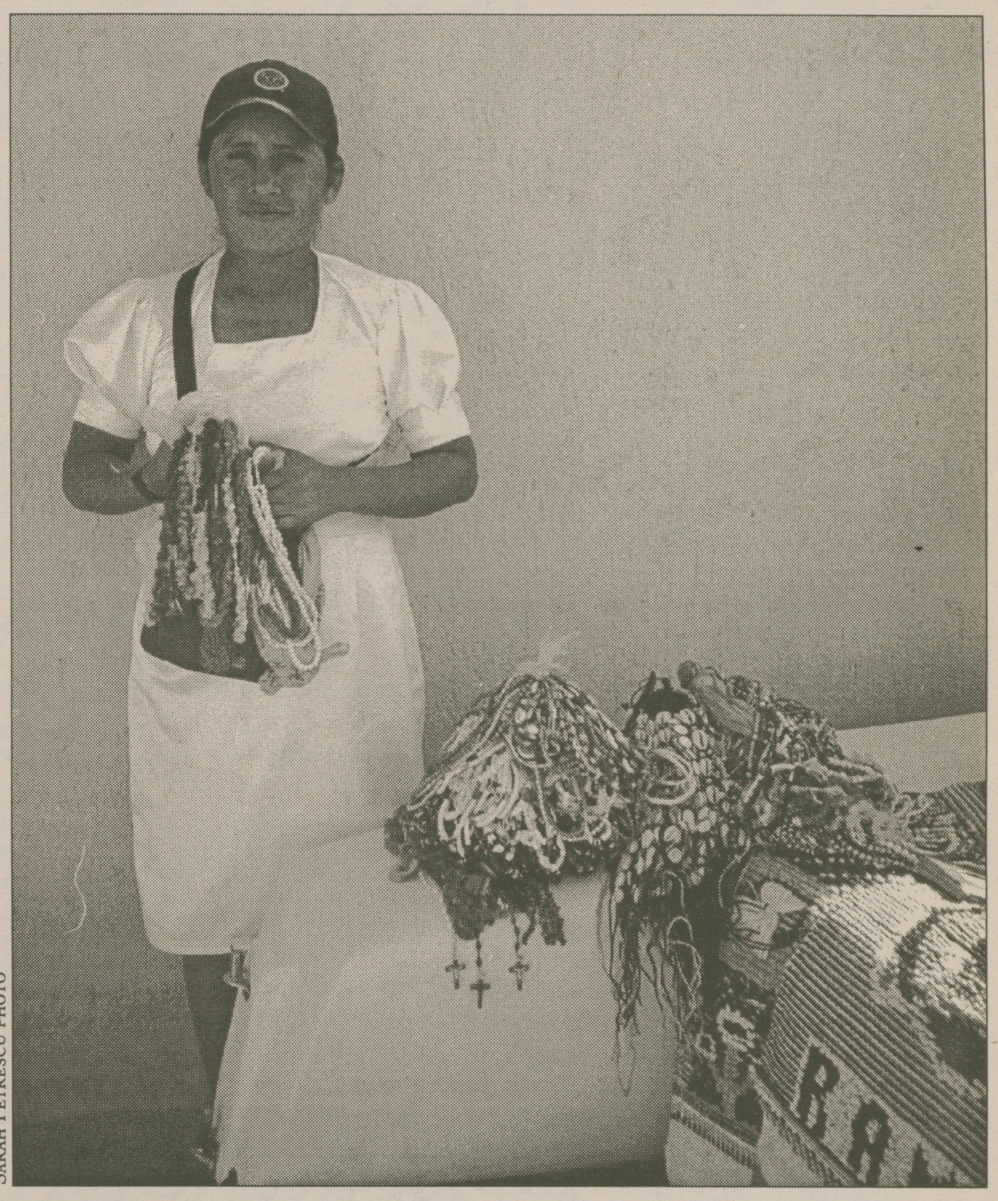
This Christmas I was one of those Canadian tourists taking full advantage of blistering sun in December, all-you-can eat buffets and open bars. Like many of my fellow vacationers, I viewed my voyage to an all-inclusive resort as a great deal: two-weeks of luxury for about $1,500 Cdn, including airfare.

After speaking to a chambermaid who was working six days a week for $3 US a day, remorse entered my guilt-free holiday. Scarce wages for the majority of the workers in the all-inclusives is why middle-class Canadians can live like queens for two weeks.

Although the disparity of wealth between white tourists and working-class Mexicans is obvious, few tourists seem perturbed by the contrast. In fact, many American and Canadian tourists come to Mexico with the expectation that they will be in an "American" environment and not have to deal with the hassles of money-exchange, language and theft that are found in traveling to other less-privileged countries. I overheard one American tourist entering the lobby of my hotel announce, "Wow, there sure are a lot of Mexicans here," commenting on the growing number of Mexican middle-class taking advantage of their country's inexpensive resorts.

Many of the tourists I met were pre-occupied by the bargaining system in Mexico where tourists wheel and deal with locals on everything from cigarettes in convenience stores to cab rides to silver jewelry sold on the beach. A middle-aged man from Southern California told me he wasn't "going to be taken for a ride by any Mexican trying to make a dime."

It is difficult to evaluate who is more demoralized by whom in an environment where the tourists are openly taking advantage of the Mexican lower class and the Mexican lower class are openly trying to take advantage of the tourists. What is obvious is who gets the long end of the stick in the bargain. It isn't Sergio Martinez.



SARAH PETRESCU PHOTO

Julia Alvarez makes and sells jewelry on the beaches of Puerto Vallarta. She is twenty-one and has two small children. Trying hard to relate her feelings in broken English, Alvarez said she likes meeting tourists from other countries but gets tired working in the hot sun seven days a week. Alvarez works with dozens of other women from small Mexican communities who come to the city to sell jewelry and braid tourists' hair on the beaches.

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Spector Undone

Columnist found recycling stories

BY PATRICK WHITE

As one of Canada's most sought after political commentators, Norman Spector is very familiar with this country's hot-button issues, but it seems he is even more familiar with his computer's cut and paste functions.

Mr. Spector's columns appear in CanWest newspapers across the country and in the *Globe and Mail*. He is a regular on CBC television and radio as well as a panelist on the New VI's television round-table "Right On."

There is no doubt that Mr. Spector has the credentials to substantiate the media's demand for his comments.

He served as Chief of Staff to Brian Mulroney, Deputy Minister to B.C. Premier Bill Bennett, Canadian Ambassador to Israel and Publisher of the *Jerusalem Post*, among many other high-level positions.

Despite the hefty experience, Mr. Spector steals material for his columns from other pieces, namely his own.

Take this excerpt published in the *Globe and Mail* on Oct. 2, 2003 pertaining to a B.C. New Democrat leadership debate held at Victoria's Alix Gooldin Hall:

The alternative would have been to explain clearly and frankly the lessons learned from mistakes made. More painful in the short-term, but it would have been allowed the New Democrats' best and brightest to contest the leadership. Since B.C. is now a "have-not" province, with the worst economic performance in the country, it would also have been in the public interest.

This appears vaguely similar to something he would write in the *Victoria Times Colonist* and a number of other newspapers owned by CanWest Global on Oct. 24, 2003 regading an entirely different NDP leadership debate appearing on the New VI:

The alternative strategy would have been to explain clearly and frankly to British Columbians the lessons learned from mistakes made. More painful in the short-term, it would have allowed the New Democrats' best and brightest to contest the leadership. Since we are now a "have-not" province, with the worst economic performance in the country, it would also have been in the public interest.

To make these comments even more questionable, Mr. Spector did not stay for the entire Alix Gooldin Hall debate. He walked out halfway through, but managed to milk his shortened attendance for two columns.

Mr. Spector's self-plagiarizing is not an isolated event. In an Oct. 24 column in the *Globe and Mail*, he stated:

The four Atlantic provinces are now Tory-blue. Revised resource agreement paralleling those in the West, would increase support for the new party federally…They, too, are fed up with dependence on Liberal vote-buying schemes; Conservatives should explain clearly how their market-based policies would enhance regional development.

With an end to vote splitting, it could elect 25–30 MPs in Ontario, more if the NDP does very well.

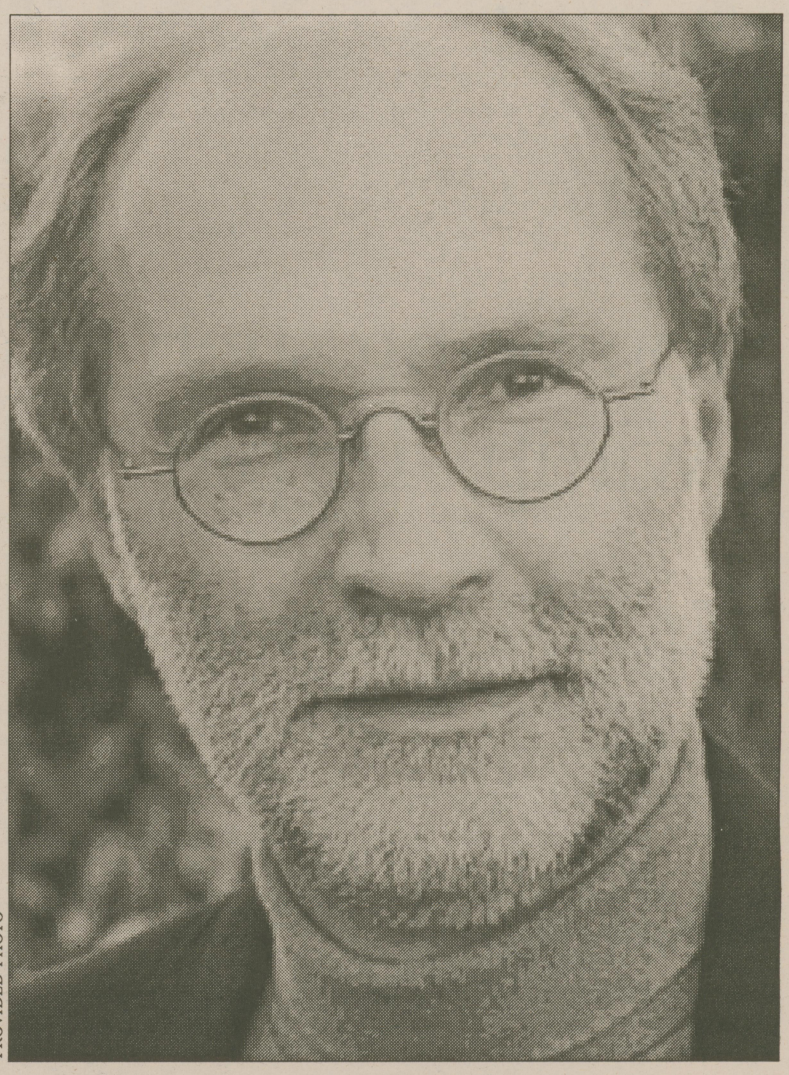
Almost two months later he would echo these views in another column appearing in the *Times Colonist* as well as several other CanWest newspapers:

All four Atlantic provinces are now Tory-blue, and revised resource agreements, paralleling those in the West, could increase support for the new party federally. Atlantic Canadians, too, are fed up with vote-buying schemes, and Conservatives should explain in that region and across the country how market-based policies would enhance regional development.

His cut-and-paste journalism aside, Mr. Spector is locally known as a champion of retaining the integrity of heritage houses in Victoria. As the co-owner of one such house, he made a presentation to Oak Bay Council on March 6, 2003. According to minutes taken at the meeting, Mr. Spector proposed to "ensure the prominence and integrity of the house" by constructing five new townhouse units on the property that would finance the upkeep of the heritage house. Under the proposal, the square footage of the townhouses were to exceed that of the heritage house they were designed to preserve.

Not surprisingly, "General unease was expressed about the impact such a development would have on the Foul Bay Road/McNeill Avenue streetscape, and for the precedent it would set for other properties along Foul Bay Road."

The proposal was consequently rejected.



PROVIDED PHOTO

Norman Spector is one of Canada's most prominent political commentators.

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EDITORIAL

Stop being such a wimp, Turpin

Holler at B.C. government, not TAs

In order for the University of Victoria to compete with other universities, faculty and staff need to be paid comparably to their counterparts across the country.

That argument is used to justify the salary of University President David Turpin, who earns $278,000, anyhow. If the university administration was consistent with their reasoning, they'd come to the same conclusion during their negotiations with CUPE 4163, the union that represents Teaching Assistants (TAs), computer lab workers and language assistants, the people who perform about one-third of the teaching on campus.

At present, TAs at UVic are paid a dramatically lower wage than their counterparts at other Canadian universities. UVic TAs earn $17 an hour, compared to $38 an hour at York, $27 an hour at SFU and $25 an hour at UBC.

A mediator was brought in over the holidays to help move forward stalled negotiations, but after several days he found little reason to stick around. After a 70 per cent tuition increase, TAs want a wage increase, since attending classes is a precondition to their work. The university is in a bind, since the B.C. government has mandated a zero per cent wage increase for public employees. Instead, they've offered compensation in the form of a fellowship.

The union, understandably, wants any gains written into the new contract. That's why campus is on the brink of a strike as this is being written.

Echoing their defense of a series of tuition fee increases, the university continues to offload responsibility to the provincial government. In this case, the Public Sector Employer's Council (PSEC) sets wage guidelines.

This is all fitting with how the university broadcasts a public image of independence and academic integrity, until the subject of money is broached. Then they maintain they're utterly powerless. Thus the UVic website disclaims, "the university does not control the timing and nature of a strike by the union," as if the TAs' response will be as unpredictable as the recent snowfall.

But President Turpin himself sits on the board of PSEC. Earlier, during negotiations in the fall, the university hinted that PSEC would agree to a wage increase of some kind.

Now the union's being told there's no leeway, that the university's hands are tied on the matter.

Of course, the university could do something. David Turpin knows how to smile at a television camera and jaw away. If he was really interested in defending the quality of education at UVic, he'd be publicly hollering– at the B.C. government.

Or, if the university administration is really as powerless as they make themselves out to be, maybe they should lead by example and take a wage cut themselves. Public education is an expensive enterprise, after all.

The university's strategic plan states, "Our goal is to offer programs in teaching and research of such quality as to place us in the upper 20 per cent of a national set of comparable programs." If they were serious about this, they'd make a strong case to the B.C. government that TAs should be paid competitively.

Editorial topics are decided on by staff at editorial meetings. Editorials are written by one or more staff members, and are not necessarily the opinion of all staff members.

Don't like what you read?
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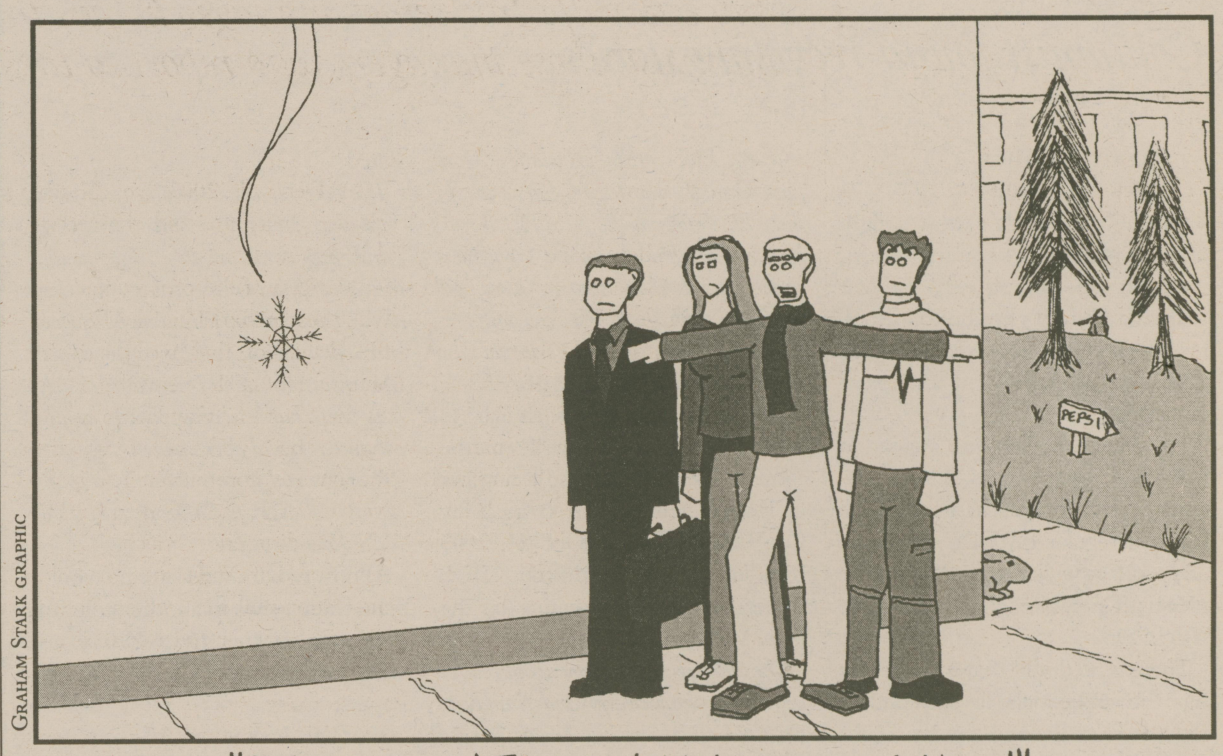

GRAHAM STARK GRAPHIC

"Nobody move! There might be more of them!"

LETTERS

Campbell's rocket offends

Dear Editor,

I find the images of Gordon Campbell riding the rocket to be completely disgusting. I'm appalled that my mandatory student society fees are being put towards a political campaign, which I do not support. I attend university to obtain an education, not to join a union.

We live in a society where people are free to express whatever political views they may have. And while I recognize those who oppose the current Liberal government and their right to protest tuition hikes, I think it is inappropriate that mandatory student fees are put towards such political protests.

Furthermore, I feel that printing disgusting cartoon sketches of those who share a different political opinion than you is also in very poor taste. If you have a point, campaign on the issues, and don't waste my money on childish cartoon sketches, which do absolutely nothing to further your point.

Sincerely,
Tom Gregson

CFS wastes student fees

I was taking a stroll through the SUB yesterday and almost choked on my falafel wrap when I saw Gordon Campbell riding a rocket up a tuition meter at the CFS table. In the past I have wondered where my student fees were going only to be faced with a United Way knock-off meter representing something I do not agree with.

The CFS rants about the right to accessible post-secondary education, but what about my right to finishing my degree in four years instead of six because I can finally get into all my classes, or my right to classes with less than ninety students where the professor knows my name?

I am paying six dollars of my student fees a semester to support an organization that does not address my concerns. Remember that old chant "Six Bucks Sucks"?

They may have finally caught on to something.

Agata Lis

International UVic students oriented, not ignored

I was shocked to see the "cartoon" that recently appeared in *the Martlet* with the article written by Heather Clark on the topic of international enrolment.

Had Ms. Clark or *the Martlet* editorial board done their homework they would have discovered that this year our office organized a full day pre-orientation event for all new international students at UVic.

In addition to this event, the UVic Orientation program also sponsored an International Student Coffee House as part of its regular orientation activities. All new international students were invited by e-mail or letter to attend our pre-orientation day and more than 170 registered for the event.

The feedback we received from the students who attended the event was overwhelmingly positive and all expressed much satisfaction with the information they received during that day.

As part of the activities organized for that day, students were introduced to several support groups, programs and services designed to facilitate their integration on our campusand in our community. All of them were also very appreciative of the free BBQ lunch offered as part of the day's events.

In addition to the pre-orientation day our office also sponsors the International Buddy Program where international students have an opportunity to meet with Canadian students. We also provide assistance and support to various UVSS groups such the International Friendship Group and the Association of International and Canadian Students (AICS).

While there is no question that given additional resources our office could do more to assist international students at UVic, it is in my opinion very misleading for *the Martlet* to portray international students as being "left on their own." All the staff at the IESS works really hard to facilitate the integration of international students on our campus and we found this so called "cartoon" extremely offensive. An apology by *the Martlet* would be much appreciated.

Pierre Laliberte

High tuition not Liberals' fault

Dear Editor,

Well, I hope that UVic students are content with Monday's performance by our Canadian Federation of Students. Not are they only wasting our money on ridiculous propaganda, but they are also using it for a rather unfitting spin.

They are constantly complaining about how tuition is going up, fair enough, but they seem to put all of the blame on Premier Gordon Campbell. Do they not realize that tuition was artificially frozen for six years? Did they forget to tell students that? Of course they did. (Why would you slander the NDP when the CFS is avid supporters of this party, given that many of their prominent members have gone on to positions within this party).

Have they forgotten to tell students that while their social saviours the NDP froze tuition, they also expected Universities increase student spaces and did not provide the adequate funds from any source to do so.

So, it may have looked good in paper, but in all reality, it was failing. UVic students beware.

The CFS is going to tell you that British Columbians didn't vote for this.

Well, in fact, 58 per cent of the voters gave the BC Liberal their mandate, and everyone knew there would be though times to come, given that people were protesting the exact same way before the election. This is a 58 per cent mandate when 70 per cent of the province.

Now, the Student Society has a 80 per cent or so mandate from the students to polarize students, spend money in areas that are of nuisance, and to fund an organization that no average student supports.

However, this is a 80 per cent mandate while five per cent of students (at most) vote.

Dallas Henault
President – UVic BC Young Liberals

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Sharma duped former SUB manager

'Any truly effective senior manager knows they must delegate to, and trust, those managers who report to them'

BY DOUG AUSMAN

UVSS members deserve far better from their elected executives and general manager.

Tim Hanson's Dec. 4 *Martlet* story, "Students' Society posts $82,402 surplus," states that "Former SUB General Manager Doug Ausman was fired for not properly dealing with Vivek Sharma, the former SUB business manager allegedly responsible for appropriating around $30,000 from the UVSS."

Current UVSS General Manager Marne Jensen is quoted as saying, "...My predecessor wasn't exactly watching the chicken coop. "

I was her predecessor.

As UVSS Business Operations Manager over 2000–2001, Vivek Sharma duped me, UVSS's elected executives, including Chairperson Jaime Matten, and many others with his convincing explanations and reports on how well the various businesses in the SUB were operating and the numerous great deals he had arranged for the UVSS with suppliers.

Ultimately, many of his explanations and reports were found to be utterly untrue. He defrauded one or more suppliers by convincing them he had paid for certain equipment for the SUB and they should reimburse him or a company he controlled. Sharma then pocketed the money.

On Dec. 17, 2003 Mr. Sharma pleaded guilty to fraud charges and was sentenced.

I was one of the prosecution's key witnesses. In 2001 I initially identified the details of the two frauds Mr. Sharma ultimately pleaded guilty to. At that time I fully outlined my findings to the UVSS executives and to the finance committee. The police were called in and I worked with the UVSS auditor until I was fired by the then-Board of Directors upon recommendation of the elected executives.

I have been very pleased to do my part over the past two years to see justice done, which includes some financial restitution to the UVSS ordered of Mr. Sharma in his court sentencing.

Any truly effective senior manager and executives of a sizeable organization know they must delegate to, and trust, those managers who report to them in order to run an organization effectively. A general manager cannot double-check every activity and transaction a senior manager like Sharma undertakes.

However, I held him accountable by requiring weekly verbal and written reports from him to me and to the board's finance committee.

I believed him.

They believed him too. Vivek Sharma betrayed our trust.

The then-executives, typical of most politicians, sought an employee-scapegoat so that they would not have to bear their portion of the heat as to why they accepted Sharma's explanations and reports, and why they trusted him as much as I did.

Their scapegoat was me.

I became General Manager in March 1997 through full, open, recruitment competition.

The enlightened board of directors sought an experienced general manager to bring a more businesslike approach to management of the SUB, to address the series of money-losing years of operations which resulted in an over $500,000 accumulated deficit, and to establish a positive working relationship with the UVic administration for the overall benefit of UVSS members.

Over the following three years, I led the UVSS management in establishing a productive relationship with the UVic administration and to three consecutive years of financial surpluses.

The accumulated deficit was reduced to almost $300,000. The following year, Mr. Sharma's shenanigans caused that accumulated deficit to return to above its former $500,000 level.

If the accumulated deficit or "debt" of the UVSS has increased several hundred thousand dollars to about $1 million as a result of further years of operating deficits, that's the responsibility of the general manager and elected executives who followed my departure.

It is misleading for current General Manager Marne Jensen to indicate to the media that the $1 million in UVSS debt is "...something she chalks up to previous management. "

UVSS members deserve far better from a former NDP ministerial assistant hired to the UVSS by the then-chairperson because of their connections, and appointed as my successor without the key minimum qualification required of previous UVSS general managers as comptroller: an accounting designation.

UVSS members also deserve far better from their elected executives, whose first priorities are broad national and international social, political and labour issues, and personal career progression to the Canadian Federation of Students' executive positions. These priorities are placed ahead of the fundamental reason for the UVSS's very existence: to focus primarily on providing excellent services to its members on the UVic campus. Isn't that what members' millions of dollars in annual dues and fees are for?

Vivek Sharma pleaded guilty to two fraud charges: $4,000 involving Felicita's patio furniture, and $10,000 involving a computer system for SUB bookstore. Other charges were dropped in exchange for the two guilty pleas. He was sentenced to a conditional sentence of eight months, including six months of house arrest, and an additional one-year probation; 80 hours community service; and restitution to the UVSS in the amount of $14,000. No jail time, but a criminal record.

Canadian Idol is democracy in action

Canadian electoral system could learn from CTV's lame sing-song show

BY RICHARD WARNICA

There's something wrong with the fact that the system used to select CTV's Canadian idol is more democratic then the one used to elect the Canadian government.

I'm not joking. By using a run-off vote, the brains behind Canadian Idol ensured that the eventual winner, Ryan Malcolm received at least 50 per cent plus one votes before being crowned. The same cannot be said for the Canadian electoral system. Not only are Members of Parliament routinely elected with less than half of the popular vote, but the ruling Liberal party has won three straight majority governments without ever once having been voted for by half the population.

By now everyone and their dog has heard of the idol phenomenon. The basic theory is that, based on a weekly performance, viewers phone in votes for their preferred contestant. The contestant with the least votes each week is gone.

The results for the remaining contestants are scrapped and the whole thing starts over again the next week.

The process continues every week until there are only two candidates left, with the contestant with the most votes on the final day being crowned Canadian Idol.

The system is actually pretty close to what political scientists call run-off voting, where an election is held on multiple dates, with the candidate with the least votes being struck from the ballot, and the others moving on, until one candidate wins more than half the votes cast.

There are two advantages to the run-off. One, nobody wins with less than half the total vote, and two, people can vote for their favorite candidate without having to worry that by doing so they might inadvertently elect their most hated candidate.

Pretty fair right?

The alternative is what we have in Canada, a system known as "first-past-the-post." If Canadian Idol were run on first-past-the-post, the entire show would take place in one episode. The winner would be whoever got the most votes on the first day, regardless of how small a percentage of the popular vote that might be.

That means that if, say, Billy the insufferable would-be-rocker with the love handles and bleach blond hair got 20 per cent of the vote on day one, he could win. Even if the vast majority of the country wanted somebody else.

Luckily, the people in the Idol business are no dummies, and Billy is now back teaching guitar to pubescent Calgarian headbangers.

Sorry to say we can't say the same thing for the people running our country.

Because of the first-past-the-post system, we're stuck with Billys all the time. In the last federal election more than a third of all seats were won by candidates with less than 50 per cent of the vote in their riding.

In other words, more than one in three Canadians are represented by a Member of Parliament that the majority of voters in their riding did not vote for. A Billy.

What's even worse is that not one of three Liberal majority governments formed in the last decade have received even half the overall popular vote.

Every major political party in Canada uses some form of run-off to elect their leader.

Yet we're still stuck with first-past-the-post.

Of course, changing to the Idol system might not in fact be the best idea.

After all, Canadian Idol and Canadian elections have shown a remarkable convergence in results. They have both given us bland white males from Ontario.

We make you angry

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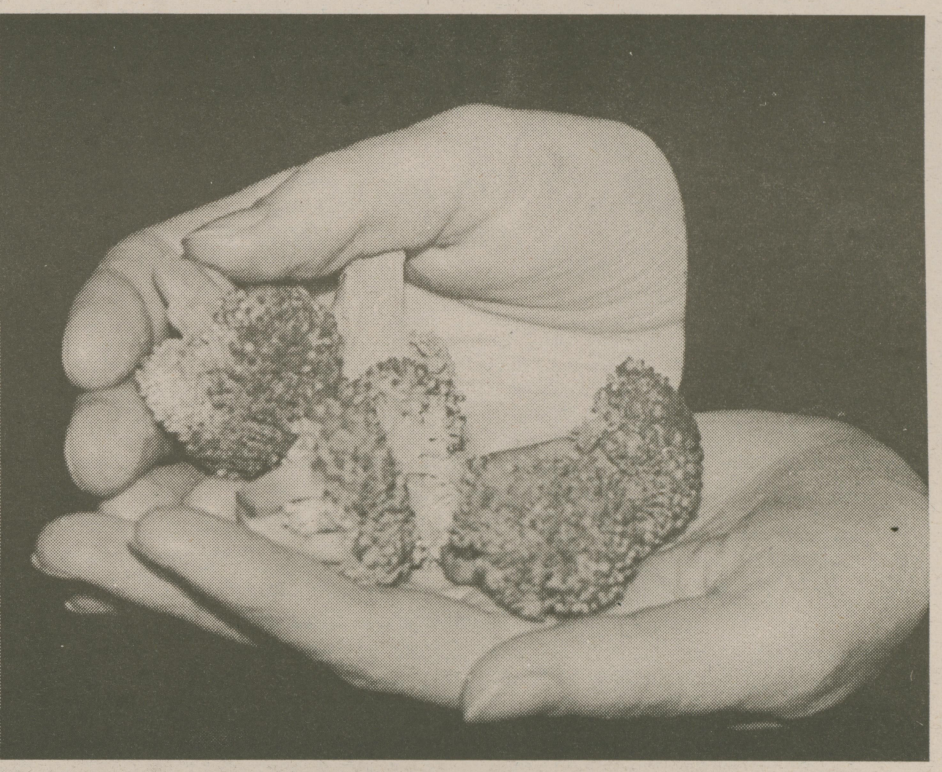


The art of dumpster diving

by Zoë Bake-Paterson

It's a cold night for November and although there's no frost, the greasy metal siding of the dumpster is icy and my fingers fumble to get a steady grip. The other two people I am with have already clambered into the shed that houses the large bin and scaled the seven feet to the top.

I am much slower, gingerly placing hand and foot on grimy surfaces as I haul myself up to peer into the darkness. I am on an urban treasure hunt–dumpster diving.

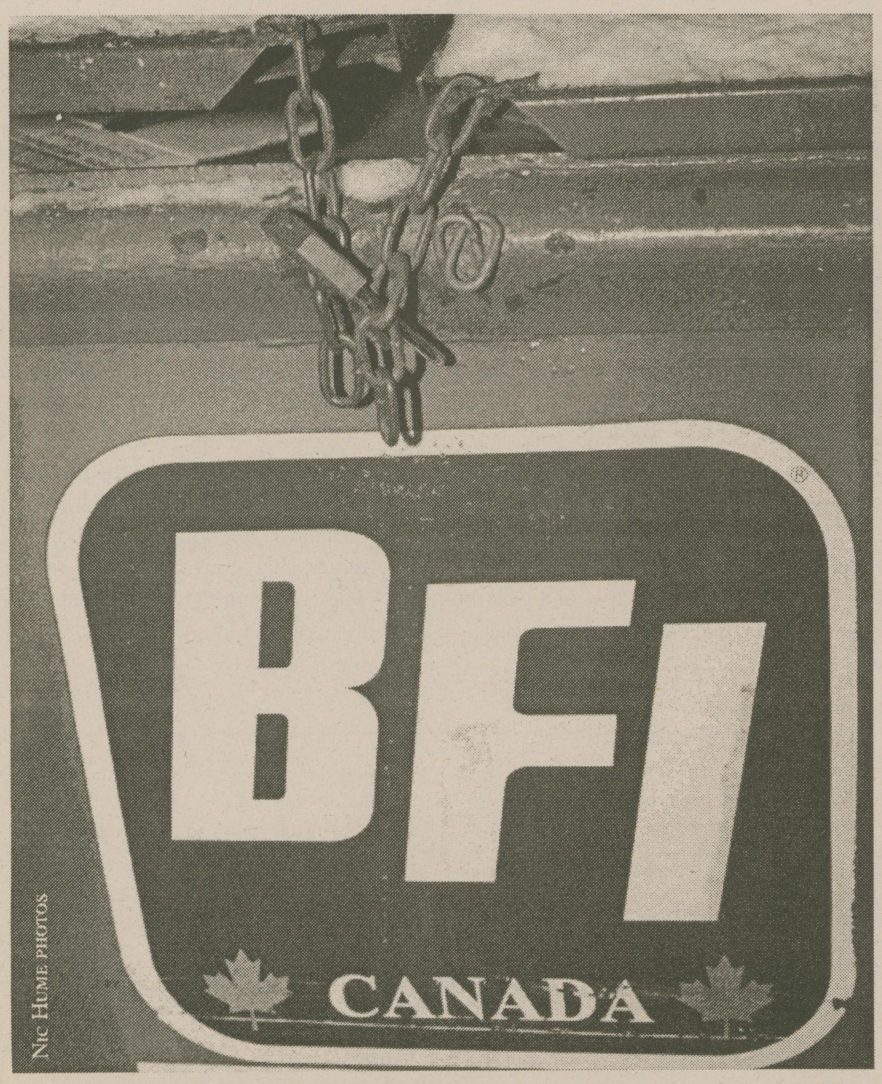
This is the fifth grocery store of the evening, and judging by the pile of trash bags in the bin, it will be a successful one. The first stop of the night was still being used by employees closing down a market; the next two dumpsters were empty. The last one we stopped at was overflowing with boxes, rotten food and a dead rat. Although we managed to scavenge quite a few tomatoes and limes, it confirmed my assumptions of how gross this expedition could be.

This dumpster has a mix of fresh fruit and vegetables, a dozen large black garbage bags and some empty plastic wrapping at the top. Since it is barely half-full, my roommate Emily jumps in and inspects the surface layer. Joe leans over the edge, grabbing a bag and ripping it open.

They both hold small flashlights and quickly begin handing me things to carry: three small kiwis, a quarter of watermelon wrapped in plastic, five apples, a cucumber, and two lemons. I take each find and put it into our cardboard box of collected things. None of it is rotten, or moldy like I worry. In fact I would happily have bought it.

I run my hands over the plastic bags nearest to me and gently squeeze the surface to feel for familiar shapes. This is my first time diving so my companions give me tips: feel for repeating shapes like apples; avoid food that spoils easily like meat or eggs; look for tetra packs especially because they rarely expire.

Without a flashlight it's hard to see, but after a few minutes I am digging up more apples for us. We are fairly quiet as we cut open bags and sort through produce and packaging against the background of traffic on Mackenzie road. With the exception of an unfortunate run-in with a bag of meat, which my vegan roommate discovers, the mission is a success. Fifteen minutes later we pull out with a cardboard box filled with fruit and vegetables and move on to the next spot.



Nic Hume photos

It's a conversation stopper, to say that you've just been dumpster diving. Sitting at a pub with some UVic law students during the week following my mission and announcing this, the room fell silent.

Someone finally responded, saying that diving is a great way to pick up secondhand furniture. I agreed, but when I specified that we were looking for food, the only other comment was blaming the Canadian and B.C. governments for the state of poverty.

And yes, many who dumpster dive probably do it out of necessity. It certainly helps pay the bills when a couple of trips to the grocery store get eliminated because of diving–as long as you can be creative with large amounts of the same product. Dumpster diving is renowned for producing vast amounts of the same thing, like two dozen tomatoes or a 10 pound box of limes. But poverty's not the only reason to do it.

"I began mostly because I didn't have money, [but also] lots of good food was being wasted. There's no point in wasting such good food, it's silly," says Joe, a 24-year-old Victoria resident who recently finished his degree. "Pretty much any kind of food you find in a store, you can find in their trash."

Most of the food we come across is in great condition, but it's been thrown out because it has reached its expiry date or looks a little battered. But there is a wide difference between what looks sellable and what is actually edible.

"We're socialized to be against it," says Joe. "To think trash is nasty and to be picky about our vegetables. We don't ever see the food off the farm so we don't know what looks 'normal'."

When we go to a bakery to buy a loaf of bread, it usually sits at home for a week. Customers will often buy day-olds too, and yet going to a dumpster to grab a packaged loaf of bread, even minutes after it has been thrown out at the end of the day, is gross.

At least, I thought it was. I had never considered dumpster diving until people around me started doing it. But seeing bags of fresh fruit and vegetables at home, things Emily found in the dumpster, that I happily ate–well the food didn't taste any different.

Dumpster diving can be gross. The dead rat that I saw earlier, that both Joe and Emily say is a one time occurrence in their experiences, proves it.

Often a number of stores will share one dumpster, so it's hard to tell what products are inside it. Paul Large, owner of Banana Belt Produce in Cadboro Bay, says his store shares their dumpster with a dry cleaning company, a hair salon, a meat product store and a restaurant.

"I'd hate to see someone in the bin eating something with chicken juice or bleach on it," he says.

The trick to healthy diving is to find sealed packages, things with preservatives or that can be scrubbed down with a little soap and water. It's an individual decision about what is and isn't edible: day-old fresh squeezed juice in a sealed container is probably safe, lettuce thrown on a pile of greasy bags, maybe not. Raw meat, definitely not.

"The only stuff that is thrown out is stuff that…is

beyond the fact of human consumption, things that are past expiry date or moldy," says Large, who sends most of the edible but unsellable food to homeless shelters. "I hate to see waste. I'd rather see it used. It costs more to throw a watermelon out than it does to buy one, because garbage disposal is paid for by weight."

Despite this, it's clear that the city's dumpsters have plenty of rewards to offer. As we work our way through produce stores in the city, Emily–also a UVic student–and Joe compare great diving stories, like the time one of them found a case of one-litre soymilk cartons, or a dozen fresh baked muffins, or a couple litres of organic juice in sealed cartons, or even the predictable stash of day-old bagels at Mount Royal Bagels.

There are a few amazing occurrences, like Joe finding 75 kilograms of flour, or 25 kg of rice–things thrown out because they were a day past their expiry date. Most things thrown out because of an expiry date are fine, particularly non-perishables like flour, rice and beans, especially if they are in sealed packages.

Hearing stories like this makes it easy to forget that for every trip to the dumpster, there's two or three where you come home almost empty-handed. Great spots are hard to come by, and because grocery stores throw out products on a monthly cycle, it's rarely on the same day or even on the same week of each month. You have to go often.

Joe and Emily also talk about getting caught, though neither of them have been. It is legal to dumpster dive in Victoria and Saanich.

"In general terms, once you throw out your garbage it is no longer your property. Once something is kicked to the curbside it is public domain," says Constable Chris Horsley of the Saanich Police Department. "But the question is, did you have to come on to private property to get it?"

A back alley is public, but a parking lot is not. Most garbage dumpsters in the city are on store parking lots or driveways.

The police encourage people and businesses to lock up their garbage bins for a number of reasons, Horsley says. This is to prevent people from dumping garbage in other's bins, to prevent identity theft by stealing phone bills or banking information, and for liability reasons–he mentions the man who was crushed to death while sleeping in a cardboard bin in Victoria last December as an example.

"You can't drive around Saanich in the wee hours without seeing [dumpster diving]," says Horsley. "It's not a problem for the police, but it's a societal problem. If people are having to seek out a living this way, it's definitely a social concern."

There are different groups of people who go diving: those who do so out of necessity, and those who don't. Often the students who dumpster dive do it more to prevent the excessive waste of edible food than because they are starving.

It is a luxury to be able to do it by choice, rather than dire need, but it pays off. John Hoffman, author of *The Art and Science of Dumpster Diving*, explains it in three steps:

1. North Americans are extremely wasteful and throw away all kinds of amazing things.
2. North Americans are snobby and afraid of germs.
3. Because of the first two points, the brave soul who is willing to poke their head into forbidding places like garbage bins will be well rewarded.

Some stores will donate excess food to charities, like Banana Belt and the Mount Royal Bagel Company in Victoria. "I know a lot of bagels that don't get used get sent to UVic and Vic High and some other charities," says Ben Taylor, an employee at Mount Royal.

But their dumpster is still one that is regularly frequented by divers because bags of day-old bagels are often thrown out each night. Some weeks there will be a lock on the dumpster outside the store, until it is broken or cut off and people begin rummaging again.

It is one of the few sites that regular divers will talk about because there is so much available. Veteran divers are fairly protective of their spots because if many people start frequenting them the stores usually lock the dumpsters.

This is what happened at the Banana Belt grocery store. The store was getting complaints about dumpster divers from people in the neighbourhood and put up a sign saying that decomposing chemicals were being regularly sprayed on the garbage.

"I've only seen it once," says Joe. "It was there and I went and asked [the Banana Belt employees] and they said they didn't actually do it."

Paul Large, the owner of the store, confirmed that they don't actually use the chemicals, but that the sign was put up to deter dumpster divers.

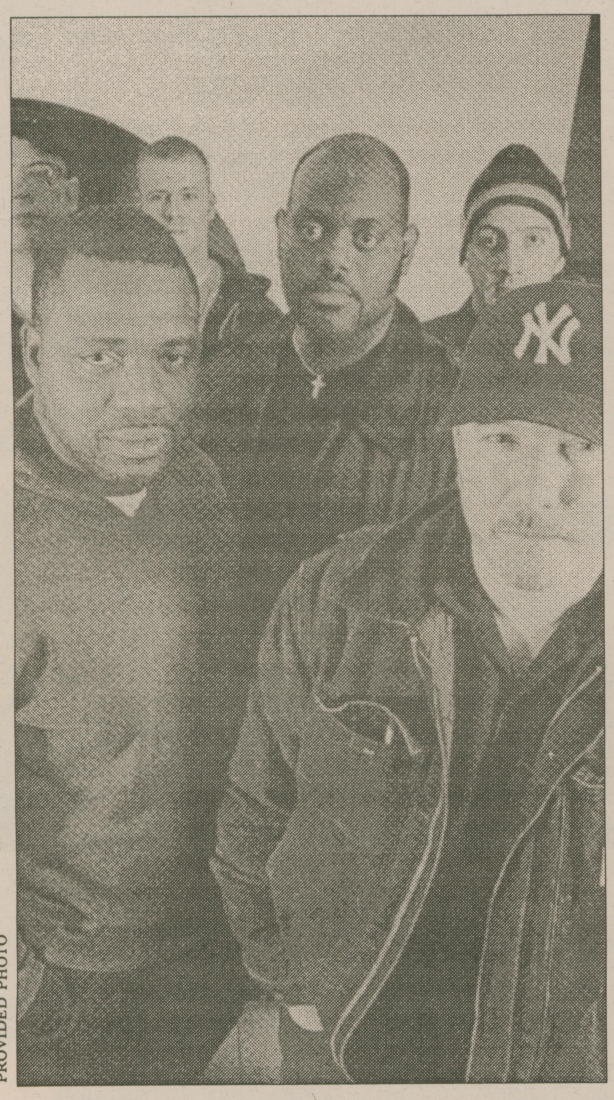
I was once told that it's possible to live entirely off dumpster diving. You can find food, clothes, furniture, books, CDs, and even Christmas decorations. Rummaging in garbage, we automatically think of nasty, gross heaps of refuse. But for some, it is a profitable and environmentally responsible activity.

I agree, but I still consider it to be more like a treasure hunt: it's rewarding, if you look hard enough, and you have to overlook the hideous smells and be willing to re-consider what you think garbage really is. I did it once, and although I'm no regular, it's definitely more of an adventure than grocery shopping.

Rules for the down and dirty diver

1. It's safer to go during the day (when you can see clearly), but more fun to go at night, and less store people will confront you. Remember to take a flashlight.
2. Take a small knife because it's a little easier than ripping open bags.
3. If you're a bit wary bring plastic gloves, especially if you're handling meat or rotten things.
4. Don't take meat or things that spoil easily. ("I know quite a few people who will eat frozen seafood if it's still frozen," says Joe).
5. Don't make a mess, keep the garbage in the bin. In fact, leave it cleaner than you found it.
6. Avoid large stores or chains (like Thrifty's or Safeway) as they use garbage compactors attached to the building, instead of dumpsters. These containers flatten all the garbage. Even if you could sneak in and find unsquashed food, you could end up flattened yourself.
7. DO NOT REVEAL YOUR SOURCES. Not everyone goes by this, but some are adamant: do not give away your best sites. If everyone goes to the same two or three stores, there will be nothing left or people will make a mess, and the store will lock up its bin.
8. Wear durable shoes and watch out for sharp things: broken glass, sharp metal cans, the urban myth of dirty syringes.
9. Bring a bag to carry away loot, because you never know when you'll hit a jackpot.
10. Be persistent. Search out grocery stores, health food stores and bakeries as they are the most consistent and go back repeatedly. Just because it was empty once doesn't mean it always will be. You have to be willing to scavenge.

Toasters keep your dancing feet warm



PROVIDED PHOTO

Ska legends The Toasters

BY FORD WALKER

If you have never seen a ska show before, this Saturday night at Central Bar and Grill would be your best bet to find out what it is all about. Legendary band the Toasters are coming to Victoria, and are sure to be an awesome show.

The lead guitarist Robert Hengley, A.K.A. Bucket, said that they have a touring record of "23 years almost nonstop, 11 albums produced, and almost 4,000 shows played." The Toasters have seen four different continents over their touring career, travelling to such exotic locales as Asia, Australia and Eastern Europe–these guys know what they are doing on stage.

The night's line-up also boasts local ska favorites Those Rapskallions, the Hoochy Girls and the Bloodwarmers. Having seen these groups before, this critic guarantees Saturday will be a show to remember.

The band formed in the lower east side of Manhattan, circa 1981, but their joyous, Caribbean-style, old-school ska music has given them staying power on the music scene. One can easily categorize them with the likes of The Specials, Madness and Hepcat in the ska hall of fame, as the Toasters have carved out a niche in popular ska culture, making their tunes enjoyable to both the connoisseur and the ska newbie.

Bucket himself has been listening to ska music "since 1964, so really I haven't had much influence from modern ska bands and I'm more likely to have influenced others than have been influenced myself."

They haven't been able to travel north of the U.S. border since 1991 due to immigration costs. This has been a concert anticipated for 13 years, and the Toasters are planning to rock the Great White North back to the Stone Age.

The opening acts aren't too shabby, either. The upbeat, rock steady musings of the Hoochy Girls are sure to impress anyone. The Bloodwarmers are also a local band whose presence is not to be trifled with. With rare appearances, they only appear for the crème de la crème of concerts. Filling up the last slot in this quartet of destruction are Those Rapskallions. Playing with the Skatalites last May, they have proven that they will not let down the crowd. With many new songs since their last performance, Those Rapskallions will impress.

Rumours of the magnitude of this show have circulated for a couple months now, and the promoter said tickets are selling like mad. Well worth the price of admission, this will make for one hell of an evening. So whether you were listening to the Mighty Mighty Bosstones before 1994 or you don't even know what the word "ska" means, this concert is sure to be the highlight of the back-to-school weekend.

The Toasters are playing at Central Bar and Grill, Jan. 10. All ages show. Tickets are $15

Smashing planets is fun for all

BY JASPER SCHWARTZ

The Planet Smashers
Mighty
Stomp

The kings of Canadian ska are back, and they're doing what they do best. With the release of their fifth album *Mighty*, the Smashers are once again taking the Canadian ska scene worldwide.

Mighty is a surprisingly polished album, lacking some of the frenetic energy of its predecessors. This isn't a bad thing, as the Smashers' sound has matured from the bouncy, upbeat ska found in their trademark songs "Surfin' in Tofino" and "Super Orgy Porno Party." *Mighty* shows a larger group of influences than earlier releases, and some of the highlights include the songs "Explosive" featuring Neville Staples of The Specials, who were to ska what The Rolling Stones were to rock.

The band has just returned from a grueling European tour, and now they're conquering Canada with fellow touring bands Flashlight Brown and Jesse James. The Smashers are one of the most active touring bands in Canada, and since 1994 they've played almost every type of show imaginable, from small clubs to Edgefest and the Vans Warped Tour.

"The Smashers as a band in general do better in smaller clubs. You get to talk to people in the crowd, meet the fans," said Scott Russel, drummer for the band.

"We played a show in Sudbury, in this tiny tiny little club for a hundred kids. They were all like insane. I don't know where they got their energy from."

Ska music peaked in popularity a few years ago, led by bands in the United States like The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, Less Than Jake and Fishbone, as well as ska-influenced artists like Sublime and Goldfinger. These U.S. ska musicians were in turn influenced from early movements in Britain and Jamaica, characterized by its fusion of guitars, bass and horns.

Though the heyday of ska seems to be past, The Planet Smashers plan to keep doing what they're doing.

"Ska has sort of dipped down a bit in popularity from what it was four or five years ago. Generally speaking, most of us are pretty happy about that," he said. "For the most part, we feel that it has been put back into the underground, which is good."

PROVIDED PHOTO

Peter Dinklage, star of *The Station Agent*, 2003's indie winner.

A little movie with big heart

BY BRIONY SMITH

Walking out of a screening of *The Station Agent*, one might have overheard someone saying something to the effect of: "Well, he was pretty good-looking… For a dwarf."

This statement and the sentiment behind it is what lies at the crux of the film *The Station Agent*.

Director Thomas McCarthy's debut film hinges on the central idea that everyone wants to be seen as themselves, not as what everyone thinks they are.

Fin McBride (Peter Dinklage) is a dwarf who is bequeathed an abandoned train station way out in the sticks of New Jersey. He figures he has nothing to lose and moves there.

In New Jersey, his neighbour, the coffee-slinger Joe (Bobby Cannavale), takes an immediate interest in him. Joe's attempts at comraderie are repeatedly rebuffed by Fin at first because he thinks Joe is only interested because he is a dwarf.

They become friends of a sort after a while, once Fin sees that Joe sees Fin as he is, not as a dwarf.

Olivia (the amazing Patricia Clarkson) is the third member of their misrepresented trio. She has lost a son and finds solace in the simple activities that Fin and Joe partake in, like walking along the railroad ties.

The Station Agent is a simply told story. This contemplative screenplay benefits from the straightforward shots that fill the screen with a reassuring blanket of greens, grays and blues–such as a scene where Fin and Joe sit on a bench in front of a beautiful river, waiting for the train to go by.

As evidenced by its winning the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival, *The Station Agent* is a lovely film that speaks to everyone.

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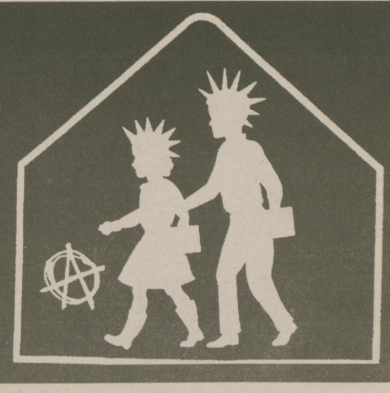


The hobbitses strike back

BY NORMAN ED BASKERVILLE

Unbelievably long and unbelievably precious! The *Return of the King*'s three-and-a-half-hour running time may numb bums and burst bladders, but it delivers big time movie-going satisfaction.

An epic in every sense of the word, this film has everything modern audiences love: stunningly realistic special effects, bloody battles, courageous acts, weird and treacherous creatures, showdowns between good against evil, even a love story, a happy ending and a warning against the desire to have dominion over others.

However, the film is more than mere action-adventure fantasy with a simple "power corrupts" theme. Throughout the sometimes-complex storyline, director Peter Jackson never breaks away from the sombre and dark mood that made Tolkien's original book such a captivating read.

Every detail of the movie, from real hand-wrought weapons and armour to lavishly detailed architectural sets, has been painstakingly created to convince the viewer that Middle Earth is a real place with a rich history. Jackson never lets an actor wink cheekily at the camera to break the spell of the myth. Storytelling, as in the trilogy's two previous films, takes precedence over spectacle.

VANESSA NEUMAN PHOTO

The Daddy Gollum (Norman Ed Baskerville) holds the Mumma Gollum, who takes care of the baby Gollum.

The film's opening scene isn't a giant troll running towards Aragorn, the human hero and uncrowned king. Instead, it begins with a startlingly dramatic scene depicting the weakness and greed of Smeagol, the hobbit-like creature who becomes the wretched, enigmatic, scene-stealing computer-generated character Gollum. Smeagol/Gollum is more than a one-dimensional Star Wars-style special effect. British actor Andy Serkis depicts both of the characters' often-conflicting personas with the emotive energy of a Shakespearean villain.

Surprisingly, some of *The Return of the King*'s more poignant scenes involve Merry and Pippin, the two hobbits who were used mostly for comic relief in the two previous films. This shows how Jackson has allowed nearly every actor in the huge cast to develop fully realized characters. Simply put, when interactions between pointy-eared elves and long-bearded dwarves do not come across as utterly ridiculous, the filmmakers have achieved something special.

In the end it is Frodo and Sam's struggle through the evil realm of Mordor, where Jackson reveals the emotional and intimate side of the epic story. Sean Astin, playing Sam, delivers the movie's best performance as he grows from a helping friend into a hero. Elijah Wood is also outstanding as the weary hobbit, Frodo, who delivers the ring to Mount Doom to be destroyed. Their quest builds a strong sense of brotherhood between them–the tragic kind that soldiers like Tolkien, a World War I and Battle of the Sommes survivor, might feel for one another.

All praise aside, the film is a success because it is the final and climatic part of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. It is a continuation of the larger story, not a self-contained episode. If you haven't seen the two previous instalments, don't expect to enjoy this film for more than its eye candy and popcorn-style action.

Like its predecessor *The Two Towers*, this installment doesn't condescend to begin with a story synopsis. It simply continues with the assumption that the audience has seen the previous movies and has the mental capacity to remember the numerous converging plotlines. However, unlike recent Trilogy disappointments–like *The Matrix*, *The Terminator* and the new breed of *Star Wars* films–*The Lord of the Rings* is so magnificent in scope that it needs to be told in three films.

In the concluding film of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, director Peter Jackson has done what most thought impossible: he's successfully adapted Tolkien's much beloved 1,000-page-plus novel onto the big screen. The *Lord of the Rings* trilogy will go down in cinematic history as one of the greatest film achievements ever.

Erotica the way it should be

Free of reservations and inhibitions

BY SARAH PETRESCU

Without Reservation: Indigenous Erotica
Collected and Edited by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
Kegedonce Press

Few anthologies of literary erotica dare to delve into realms of genital jittering smut, opting more for the high ground of ethereal poetry and carefully crafted fiction with a so-called "erotic" edge.

Without Reservation: Indigenous Erotica does both. While Linda Hogan's beautifully written poem, "The Creations of Water and Light," hovers around first-base foreplay, Thom E. Hawke's "Pow Wow Moment" scores a home run with lines like, "Slowly, I move my cock inside you, withdrawing it just to the point where its / bulbous head parts your labia minor."

Without Reservation contains the who's who of First Nations Lit, such as Daniel David Moses, Beth Brant, Maria Campbell and Sherman Alexie, and newcomers, such as UVic's William George.

Editor and contributor Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm says the anthology is the first of its kind. In her introduction to the book she writes, "A person could reach puberty, live her entire adult life, go through menopause and still not have stumbled across a single erotic poem or story by a First Nations writer."

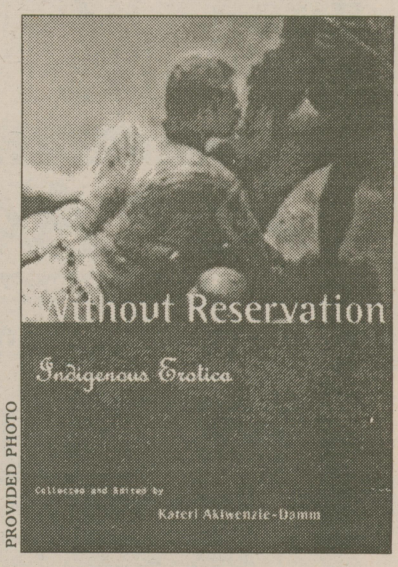
She came up with the idea for the anthology in a bar in Toronto, while joking with fellow Aboriginal writers Drew Hayden Taylor and Lee Maracle. Akiwenzie-Damm took the idea seriously and began her five-year search collecting and soliciting Indigenous erotica.

The pieces in the book are vast and varied, perhaps too much so. The order of poetry and prose doesn't seem to follow any coherent movement or theme. The result is erotica blueballs: a mish-mash of tantalizing and deflating works.

There are some hot ones though. Namely, Beth Brant's prose poem, "So Generously," about the poet's affair with a sensual Puerto Rican woman and Akiwenzie-Damm's poem, "more than skindeep."

The light and dirty side of *Without Reservation* is satiated through fantasy poems by Randy Lundy in "In the Bikini Bar" and "The Lost Art of Winking." Maria Campbell's poem "Good Dog Bob," relays the story of the speaker's near encounter with the husband of a one-time mistress and how he came to get the nickname "Good Dog Bob." The poem is hilarious and innocent, written entirely in the cadence and voice of the young male speaker.

Without Reservation is good literature and even better erotica. More importantly, it signifies that the breadth of First Nations literature is expanding and in demand.



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Distance lags behind

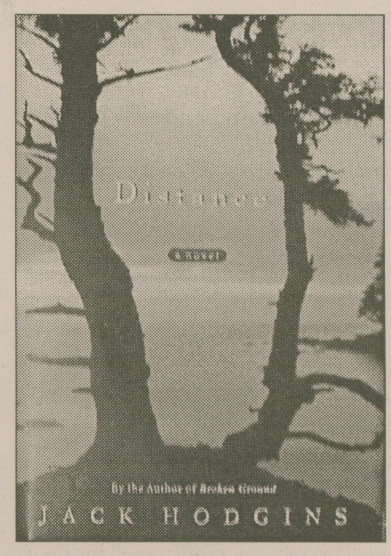
BY RICHARD WARNICA

Distance is the frenetic and at times episodic story of Sonny Alto and his dying father Timo. It is not Jack Hodgins' best work, neither as sharply creative as his early short stories, nor as effortlessly haunting as his 1998 masterpiece, *Broken Ground.* That being said, *Distance* is worth reading, if only for its uncanny portraits of small-town Vancouver Island life.

The book opens on Sonny, a self-made garden store and French-fry-wagon tycoon, flying home to Vancouver Island to be with Timo in what is assumed to be the last days of his life.

Upon his son's arrival, Timo, a cantankerous alcoholic, demands that Sonny take him to the northern tip of Vancouver Island where he intends to leap to his death. To forstall this, Sonny accepts an invitation from a newly discovered half-brother in Australia to come and finally meet the mother who abandoned him when he was a small child. Coming along for the ride are Sonny's own prodigal daughter Charlotte and Lachlan, a male prostitute and street kid from Sydney, Australia. It is remarkable that Hodgins manages to make all of this work. Or mostly manages to.

The novel, which is split by setting into five parts, has the pacing of a jet-lagged day in an unknown city. The reader is jerked unceremoniously from the coastal rainforests of Vancouver Island to the sun-baked desert of the Australian outback and back again. Along the way, Hodgins indulges his admittedly remarkable



Jack Hodgins, Canadian writer and beloved former UVic professor

talent for evoking setting.

He masterfully describes backdrops as diverse as Ottawa's frozen Rideau Canal, Victoria's Butchart Gardens and the fast flooding outback of Queensland, Australia. The book is at its strongest, however, when describing the intimate settings and interactions of the small town crowds the invented communities of Portuguese Creek, B.C. and Mistake Creek, Australia.

The protective gang of aging Portuguese Creek loggers that guard Timo and admonish Sonny for his supposedly neglectful ways provide both comic relief and the most well-realized characters in the entire story. They are matched by an equally crusty and dysfunctional bunch–a ranching family from the Queensland outback.

Strangely, the central characters and themes are by far weaker than the supporting cast. For one, Hodgins' portrait of the aging alcoholic Timo is wholly unconvincing. He makes the mistake of using Timo's alcoholism as a plot device, rather than as a domineering character feature. For a man who is supposed to have spent 60 years as a full-blown wino, Timo is remarkably sober for the bulk of the novel. Only when Hodgins' needs a health crisis to advance the plot does a flask and a sudden bout of fever-inducing booze appear.

The problem is indicative of a larger flaw. Hodgins consistently advances his plot at the expense of his themes. He spends most of the novel laying out the life-long flaws of Timo and Sonny's relationship, only to have them reconcile following a contrived river rescue, just in time for Timo to wander contentedly to his death.

Sonny's relationships with his own children are no better. Rather then focus on the two grown children that he doesn't know, Hodgins has Sonny engage with a pseudo-family in the shape of the caricatured small-town diner waitress Holly and her cloyingly cute son.

So, in a novel about the relationships between fathers and their children, Hodgins' has one end in a phony reconciliation and another focusing on the replacement family. Neither conclusion is satisfying.

Despite its flaws, *Distance* is still a rewarding read. Hodgins' prose is evocative, spare and at all times highly readable. Even when not entirely engaged with the characters, it is a difficult book to stop once started.

Rich eats for cool prices

BY SARAH TOWLE

Fifth Street Bar and Grill
1028 Hillside Street
Service ★★
Atmosphere ★★★½
Food ★★★
Prices ★★

Established in Victoria just over five years ago, the Fifth Street Bar and Grill is a trendy little restaurant offering old-fashioned food at decent prices. The chic brick building is located on Hillside Ave. at Fifth St., just east of Quadra Street. In bus lingo, this means taking the #4 or #6 and getting off at Quadra and Hillside.

The Fifth Street Bar and Grill has a casual neighbourhood pub atmosphere, accommodating the younger crowd. Dim lighting and brick walls contrast with the vibrant abstract paintings and trendy sculptures that adorn the walls. Modern jazz music plays softly in the background, muffling the clamour of the kitchen. The fire-brick oven offers scents of roasting cedar and garlic, while the bar offers a wide variety of drinks.

Seating includes oak tables, benches, and booths cushioned by leathery pillows, as well as an outside gazebo. The gazebo is warmed with numerous heat lamps and a fire place, while little white Christmas lights and ivy decorate the wrought iron walls.

The menu is organized into price categories–$5, $10 and $15– perfect for the starving student. Dinners such as roasted chicken and ribs, baseball steak, seafood risotto, and chicken fettuccini offer the perfect taste of home-style cooking. For more adventurous types, there is a flat-bread pizza menu, offering obscure but tasty combinations of toppings such as mangos, pears, nuts and artichokes, as well as the usual pizza toppings. All the entrees, including the pizzas, are roasted in the wood-fire oven.

The drink menu is also organized into price categories, with many different kinds of drinks: martinis, beer, highballs, shooters, and Caesars. I started off with a "Hillside," which arrived in an old-fashioned chilled glass with a block of ice frozen to the bottom. The delicious fruity drink stayed cold for the entire evening.

For dinner, I ordered the baseball steak ($15), which included shoestring potatoes and grilled vegetables. The presentation was a piece of art: everything was strategically placed on the plate and topped off with sprinkles of various herbs and spices. The steak itself was mouthwatering, presenting a combination of wood-fire and juicy flavors. Adding to the effect were the spiced grilled vegetables. Salty and battered to perfection, the shoestring potatoes made the meal feel a bit more casual and were a perfect side dish to pick away at.

For dessert, I ordered the almond chocolate cheesecake and a Spanish coffee ($5 each). The extravagant dessert menu includes apple crumble, toffee coffee cake and a variety of cheesecakes. The cheesecake was presented beautifully, dripping with thick creamy chocolate and dollops of whipping cream, and sprinkled with almond shavings. The Spanish coffee was very strong with hints of alcohol and chocolate.

Open for dinner until 10 p.m., with late-night snacks and drinks until 2 a.m., the Fifth Street Bar and Grill offers excellent food at relatively decent prices. It is perfect for the budget conscious student.

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Unicorns are people, too

by Adam Jones

With their new Alien 8 release *Who Will Cut Our Hair When We're Gone*, the Unicorns are a band whose sparkly pink horn is ominously poised over the Canadian independent music scene.

So what is a Unicorn?

"It was meant to be a simple cute kind of name, with a fairly innocuous meaning, but one that could actually be deadly," said Nicholas Diamonds, one half (the other being Alden Ginger) of the original duo. "[Unicorns] actually sang too, but they had horrible voices, like screeching. It just seemed like the right fit."

The name is fitting, as the Unicorns crossbreed a kind of innocence with darkness, like a dead child who morticians have cunningly infused with all the glorious virtues of youth.

They have a unique faux-naif rock sound, a wistful melancholy crafted out of angular guitar lines, primitive synths and catchy melodies.

Diamonds expanded on the theme: "You might think that the Unicorns would really be a shimmery pop kind of band, but we want to get people to listen to things that they might not normally hear, like sticking in parts that might seem really discordant in an otherwise catchy kind of song. I think the lyrics are an extension of that."

The songs, much like those of 60s psych-pop legends Love, are spoonfuls of sugar with a bit of medicine inside with themes of disease, love, death and survival predominating.

Tracks like "Jellybones" really showcase the band's musical diversity. This song is, on first glance, about a disease that causes your bones to turn to jelly, which is as Diamonds puts it "the feeling you get when you're in love–it's a love song."

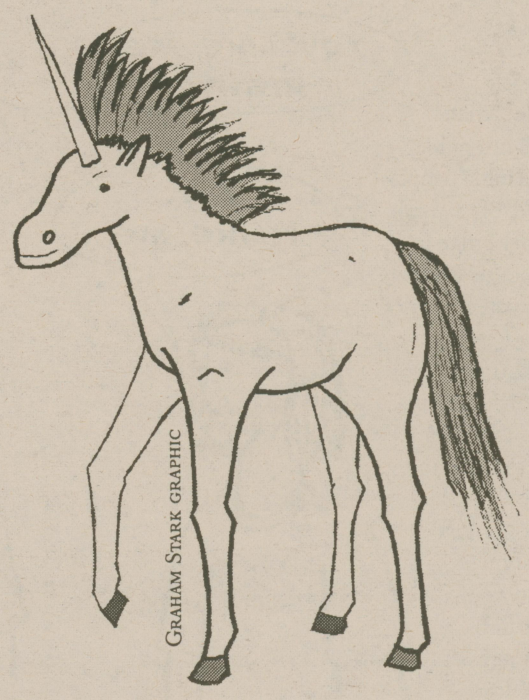
The musical elements present are varied, progressing from a noisy synth intro to a mid-tempo rock song to a slow, dreamy finish. This lack of the tired verse-chorus-verse structure really makes the Unicorns stand out from the pack. Each song organically grows out of itself, providing a series of intense individual moments.

The Unicorns have been noted for their impressive live show, which has progressed since the addition of drummer J'aime Tambour. "I think that before I was in the band there was a lot less dancing going on," he said. "I also keep them from forgetting the song halfway through, which is good."

Along with a penchant for pink, the Unicorns have been known to go to such lengths as live puppet shows to keep their performances sparkling.

"I think the audience should feel like they're a part of it, that there's something exciting happening," explained Diamonds. "We want to reward them and give them as much of a show as possible. It helps if you dress sharp or funny or something and there's something to look at. We just want to take it as far as we can and not be lazy."

The band has toured with other glowing stars in independent music's glittering firmament, including Cat Power ("we bum rushed the stage and ate all her food, so she kicked us out") and Daniel Johnston ("he's a beautiful songwriter, and we're lucky to play with people we admire"). They are now touring with Victoria's own Hot Hot Heat, and kick-starting another cross-country tour.


Graham Stark graphic

This hectic scurry across the nation might be their coup-de-grace–when asked about the apparent death wish in their song "Ready to Die," Diamonds said: "I feel that this band is on the edge, that we don't really get along very well. I think that it's conceivable that we'll burn out really fast; I think that J'aime might choke on his vomit at some point. Our drummers always explode on us, but J'aime, well, he hasn't exploded yet."

Finally, these words straight from the Unicorns' mouth: "If you come to our show wearing pink, you'll get something very special."

Coldplay live–and doing nothing of interest

by Richard McDevitt

Coldplay
Live 2003 DVD
Capitol/EMI

For a band with such a good reputation for live performance, *Live 2003* is the first Coldplay release that can truly be called disappointing.

The band plays well, the songs sound great, but it's boring to sit through and it fails to create any atmosphere, much less excitement. The editing is choppy and often too hectic for the pace of the songs.

Some of their best material like "Green Eyes" and "Sparks" doesn't even make an appearance, while a very R.E.M-ish B-side titled "One I Love" and a new unreleased track "Moses" sound more like intrusions rather than welcomed new material.

There are, however, some moments that make it worth owning. The opening track "Politik" is even more thunderous than the album version. For fans who haven't managed to dig far back into the band's discography, the often neglected yet gorgeous ballad "See You Soon" from their first Parlophone release *The Blue Room EP* will be a nice surprise.

Besides an extremely fast, comical punk version of "Yellow," the 40-minute documentary accompanying the performance is also disappointing. It shows the band doing and saying nothing of great interest, and fails to animate, or give you any significant insight about the band.

Next time, Coldplay should take a page from Oasis and release a completely self-indulgent stadium concert. At least it wouldn't put the fans to sleep.

Keeping late hours?

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A collection of quickies

Nickelback
The Long Road
EMI

You know that really bad eighth-grade poetry that a lot of people are ashamed of? I think Chad Kroeger broke into some kid's house and stole his diary to write the lyrics for *The Long Road*.

Some of them are downright cheesy. Some of them are downright disturbing, like "We gotta make love just one last time in the shower." In fact, most of them are disturbing. Chilling gems include: "I love my hands around your neck," "I like your pants around your feet," and "You're like my favorite damn disease." Is that really the mental image female listeners would want while listening to music: the soothing, steamy, erotic thought of shower sex with an angry guy who sort of looks like Jesus?

The leadoff single "Someday" reeks of Our Lady Peace's single "Is Anybody Home" to the point where I wouldn't be surprised if lawsuits followed its fall off the charts.

The guitars are loud and beefy. Everything sounds smooth and in its place. The vocals are supposedly angry. There's just enough pop mixed in to keep them out of the metal section, leaving Nickelback sounding completely outmoded and phony.

GRAHAM STARK GRAPHIC

Has everyone forgotten Nirvana? They did the whole angry/strung-out/depressed shtick much better. They sounded heartfelt while Kroeger sounds bloated and pathetic.

So after 12 tracks, does this bland over-produced train wreck come to a halt? Nope, they've souped the album up with three bonus tracks, including the worst cover in history. Lock your doors kids, 'cause Nickelsuck's taken a stab at Elton John's "Saturday Night's Alright (For Fighting)" from his 1973 double LP masterpiece *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*. There is a certain satisfaction in hearing this cover, no matter how awful, because each spin only confirms how the original version has more balls.

This year we've heard from Nickelback and had to suffer through Limp Bizkit's excruciating attempt at a comeback. This can only mean that Creed aren't far behind. Heaven save us from those with no talent.

– Richard McDevitt

Star Spangles
Bazooka!!!
Capitol

On the Star Spangles' debut *Bazooka!!!* the upstate New Yorkers sing about girls, rock and roll, and parties. Unfortunately that's the extent of the band's subject matter and more often than not, the rebellious tone feels contrived.

Sounding more like a tribute album to the Replacements and Cheap Trick rather than an experiment in post-garage sound, their energetic attempts at party anthems are abound but often fall flat. The band even resorts to using the old "spell-out-the-title-of-your-song" trick on the track "Party," but sadly it inspires nothing more than a little toe-tapping.

The Star Spangles shine on tracks like "Which One of the Two of Us is Gonna Burn This House Down?" Lead vocalist Ian Wilson tempts the listener with his gravely voice and in the instant when the band manages to convince the listener that, yes, they do indeed love trouble, the result is rather charming.

Another one of the album's stronger tracks is the Star Spangles cover of "Crime of the Century," originally performed by Gang Wars (a relatively obscure collaborative between members of the New York Dolls and MC5). While the song starts with some awkward vocals, it eventually picks up to a steady beat.

Bazooka!!! isn't bad, but the Star Spangles themselves are more interesting visually than aurally. Great hair, boring songs.

– Emily Pietraszek

Singapore Sling
The Curse of the Singapore Sling
Stinky Records

At just over 43 minutes, the first release from Reykjavik's Singapore Sling, *The Curse of the Singapore Sling* is an ambitious ride through the land of neo-psychedelic fuzz rock.

Although there's only one cover song on this album (The Standells' "Dirty Water"), it's sometimes hard to tell whether or not Singapore Sling is trying to forge their own way through the genre, or whether they're simply aping bands, such as the Jesus and Mary Chain, who mastered the art of feedback rock nearly two decades ago.

A problem many revival-rock acts face is that of coining their own, original sound. While most tracks off *The Curse of the Singapore Sling* do a great job at demonstrating the musicianship and skill of the band members, it's obvious that vocalist, guitarist and songwriter Henrik Bjornsson was cautious in stepping beyond the styles of the band's influences.

That said, there are some definite standout tracks on the album. "Summer Garden" showcases Bjornsson's beautiful deadpan delivery of lyrics over a dreamy organ that screams Velvet Underground (in a good way).

"Listen," one of the album's more up-tempo songs, is lyrically minimal, shifting the focus onto Bjarni Johannsson's tight and rhythmic drumming.

Bearing in mind that this is a debut album, *The Curse of the Singapore Sling* is a solid release. Future albums from the Icelandic sextet (they actually have a designated maraca and tambourine player!) hold promise to win over more fans, if only they manage to step away from their influences and find their own sound.

– Emily Pietraszek

Sadness of the clue man

BY DANIEL SAUNDERS

Steve Burns
Songs For Dustmites
Pias America

Steve Burns used to be the host–and sole human–on one of the earth's most popular children's shows, *Blue's Clues*.

Now he's put out a rock album.

Get over it.

The skills that make for a great alternative rocker have proven to be surprisingly interchangeable with those of a great children's entertainer. They Might Be Giants just put out an acclaimed interactive children's CD, and The Rheostatics' 1999 album *The Story of Harmelodia* was a picture book with a collection of songs included. On the other side of the coin, the Fraggles rock, and Mr. Rogers plays a mean jazz piano.

Frankly, faced with the choice between albums by Bruce Willis, Billy Bob Thornton or the guy who sings the "We Just Got a Letter" song, I'd place my bet on the man in the green-striped shirt every time.

Lending further cred are contributions from Steven Drozd of The Flaming Lips, who plays on many of the tracks, and the producer behind the Lips' gorgeous *The Soft Bulletin*, David Fridmann.

The result is a collection so heartfelt and appealing that it sounds almost old-fashioned. The album is only saved from sheer radio-friendliness by two Flaming Lips trademarks: the odd ka-thumping bass sounds and the kind of eclectic yet lush orchestration that conjures the image of a group of animal friends playing back-up with made-up instruments like the "acorn flute."

It opens with a handful of instantly catchy songs, including "What I Do On a Saturday" and the anthemic "Mighty Little Man." Burns has a yearning, unaffected rock voice for the soaring choruses, and whispersings like Yo La Tengo's Ira Kaplan in the quieter moments.

Burns spoke in an interview on hipmama.com about the stress of being expected to be "merry on demand," and described sitting on the subway and listening to Radiohead's "Fake Plastic Trees." He was just getting to the good part, "…so wonderfully glum," only to look up to see four nannies beaming at him across the car. Throughout the rest of the album, he gets to reveal his wistful side, singing "I'd need a reason to see you again/Give me a reason, let's not be friends." But even in songs about lying on the floor in the fetal position after being dumped, there's an underlying joyfulness.

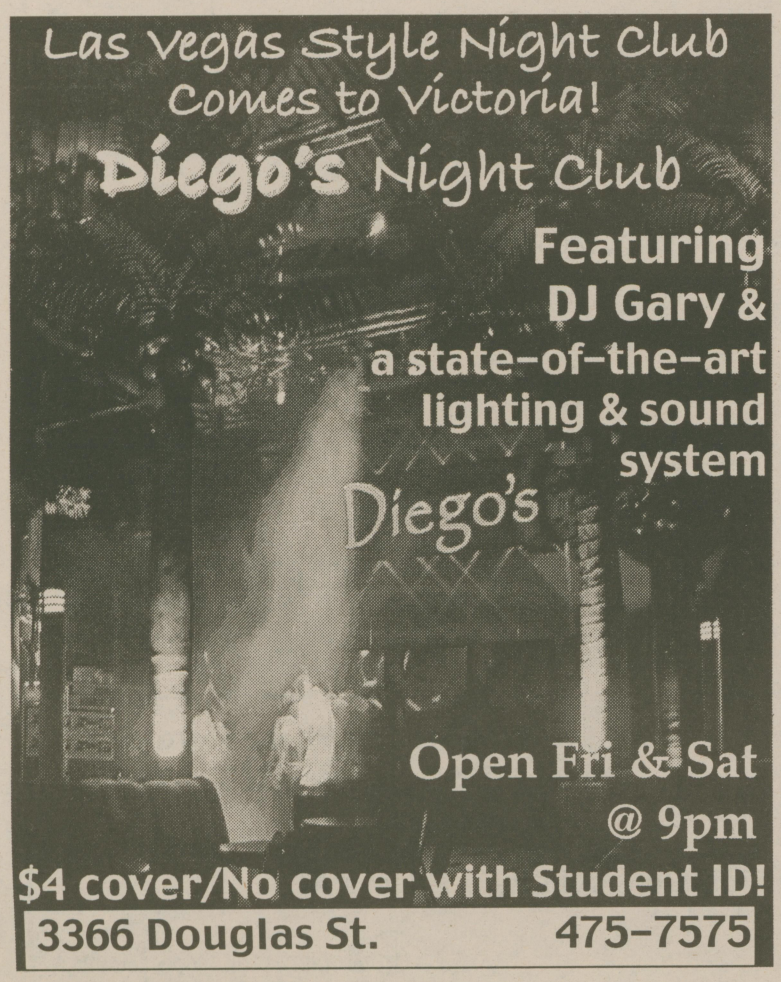
PROVIDED PHOTO

Blue's Clues' Steve Burns before and after leaving the yellow house and the blue dog to pursue rock godhood.

Songs for Dustmites only half lives up to its billing as "sweet-sounding songs of love and science." The songs name-check the troposphere, nanobots, and string theory, but are really about relationships. Only ocassionally do the lyrics fall back on alt-rock vagueness and clichés like superheroes as metaphors.

Despite the big guitars and blue moments, this is the same man who still captivates children in reruns with his sincerity and winsomeness. Burns has never repudiated his TV persona, calling *Blue's Clues* "brilliant, in a sort of punk rock, kill-your-TV way." His website promoting the album has a page about the importance of affirmations to adults and children ("You look great today!"), and pictures of squirrels.

In April 2002, the character Steve left his dog Blue and the house on the hill to go to college. Listening to this album, it's as though he got his heart broken while he was there, but also discovered college rock–think R.E.M. and Radiohead–that made the sadness okay. A mighty little man indeed.



World Cup of Hockey returns

BY RICHARD WARNICA

The World Cup of Hockey is returning this summer after a seven year hiatus. The tournament, originally meant as a replacement for the Canada Cup, has not been played since the U.S. won in 1996.

This year's edition features two divisions: one to play in Europe and the other in North America. The European division has the Czech Republic, Sweden, Finland and Germany, while the North American one includes Canada, the U.S., Russia and Slovakia.

Both divisions play three round-robin games each before advancing to the quarterfinals.

In a rematch of the gold medal game from the 2002 Olympics, Canada plays the U.S. in their first game on August 31.

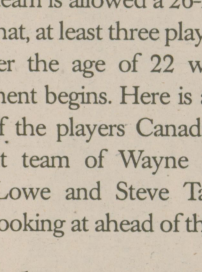
Each team is allowed a 26-man roster. Of that, at least three players must be under the age of 22 when the tournament begins. Here is a look at some of the players Canada's management team of Wayne Gretzky, Kevin Lowe and Steve Tambellini will be looking at ahead of that game.

Forwards

Shoo-ins

Joe Sakic, Colorado Avalanche

Aside from being the best centre in the game over the last decade, Sakic was also the best forward for Canada in the 2002 Olympics. In his 15th year in the league, Burnaby Joe is still averaging more than a point a game and continues to anchor the Avalanche power play and penalty kill.



Todd Bertuzzi, Vancouver Canucks

Since missing out on selection for the Olympic team two years ago Bertuzzi has been the best power forward in hockey. His 46 goals one season ago were the most by any Canadian-born player and second only to Sweden's Milan Hejduk. With the World Cup being played on the smaller NHL ice, with the more lenient NHL rules, the hugely physical Bertuzzi should thrive.

Paul Kariya, Colorado Avalanche

Kariya has never blossomed into a dominant winger. That being said, the Vancouver product was still a point-a-game player as the only real offense on the Mighty Ducks last year.

Joe Thornton, Boston Bruins

Like Bertuzzi, Thornton has dominated since missing out in 2002. His 101 points last season were the most by a Canadian and the third highest in the entire league. At six foot four and more than 230 pounds, Thornton will likely anchor the second line at the World Cup.

Steve Yzerman, Detroit Red Wings

Stevie Y hasn't played more than 54 games since 1999 and hasn't broken 80 points since 1996. Last year, wonky knees left him on the shelf for all but 16 regular season games. Given that, if the Red Wings' captain is healthy there is no way Gretzky will leave him off the team.

Should Go

Jarome Iginla, Calgary Flames

Iginla remains one of the game's elite goal scorers. His partnership with Sakic in the last Olympics produced three of the five goals in the gold-medal game. Iginla should thrive again at the World Cup.

Owen Nolan, Toronto Maple Leafs

Nolan is one of the best two-way forwards in the game. However, with the emergence of Iginla and Bertuzzi, it could be argued that Canada does not need another bruising winger.

Mike Peca, New York Islanders

With only two goals through 30 games, the Islanders' captain is the being floated as potential trade bait. But Peca is still the best shut-down man in the league and the only true defensive centre with enough offensive upside to deserve the maple leaf jersey.

On the bubble

Alex Tanguay, Colorado Avalanche
Simone Gagne, Philadelphia Flyers
Vincent Lecavalier, Tampa Bay Lightning
Ryan Smyth, Edmonton Oilers
Joe Nieuwendyk, Toronto Maple Leafs
Brendan Shanahan, Detroit Red Wings

Defense

Shoo-ins

Rob Blake, Colorado Avalanche

In his 16th year in the league, Blake is still one of hockey's best blue liners. With offensive numbers better then most forwards and an almost unmatched defensive presence, Blake will anchor Canada's blue line as long as he can skate.

Chris Pronger, St. Louis Blues

The 1999–2000 NHL MVP is another lock. After losing almost the entire 2002–2003 season to injury, the 6 foot 6 inch Pronger is on track for another big number season with the St. Louis Blues.

Adam Foote, Colorado Avalanche

Maybe Canada's best defensive defencemen. On a Canadian blue line bound to be dominated by offensive players, the defense-first Foote is a necessity.

Should go

Ed Jovanoski, Vancouver Canucks

A poor second half could keep Jovanoski off the team. He is still enough of a defensive liability to prevent automatic selection.

Al MacInnis, St. Louis Blues

How can you argue with a guy that scored 68 points, from the blue line, at the age of 40? As long as MacInnis plays decently between now and August, he will be going.

Scott Niedermayer, New Jersey Devils

Three Stanley Cups, an Olympic gold medal, unmatched speed and defensive responsibility in a player barely peaking 30 is just too much to turn down.

On the Bubble

Eric Brewer, Edmonton Oilers
Wade Redden, Ottawa Senators
Derek Morris, Colorado Avalanche

Goal tenders

Shoo-ins

Martin Brodeur, New Jersey Devils

Quite simply the best big game goalie in hockey. More wins, shutouts and Stanley Cups then any other active goalie, and he's only 31 years old. Brodeur will be Canada's starting goalie, end of story.

Should go

Ed Belfour, Toronto Maple Leafs

Last year Belfour was the only reason the Toronto Maple Leafs contended, and he hasn't shown any signs of slowing down this season. Eddie the Eagle is one of the few Canadian goaltenders with a Stanley Cup. Having him as a backup to Brodeur would be a very smart move indeed.

On the bubble

Jose Theodore, Montreal Canadians
Sean Burke, Phoenix Coyotes
Jean-Sebastien Giguere, Anaheim Mighty Ducks
Curtis Joseph, Detroit Red Wings

My team if picked today:

Forwards

Kariya Sakic Bertuzzi
Tanguay Thornton Iginla
Nolan Peca Smyth
Yzerman Lecavelier Shanahan
Gagne

Defense

Blake Foot
Pronger MacInnis
Jovanoski Niedermayer
Redden

Goalies

Brodeur
Belfour
Theodore

Under-22 players

Jay Bowmeester
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Vikes burn holiday calories at Vetrie tournament

by John Thompson

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the season for turkey and chocolate, it was the season for getting back into shape.

So went the annual UVic men's basketball tournament held at McKinnon gym over the holidays, where the Vikes made turkeys of their first two opponents, only to have the stuffing knocked out of them by Carleton in their final game.

The event began on a sombre note. The tournament, formerly known as the Vikes invitational, was renamed this year after UVic head coach Guy Vetrie unexpectedly died this September while jogging the trails surrounding the university.

Prior to UVic's first game against York on Dec. 27, a plaque was given to Vetrie's wife, Lil, followed by a moment of silence.

"It was emotional," she said afterwards. "I think it's a great tribute to Guy."

Playing in his first tournament was Guy's son, Ryan, a first-year guard on the team.

"I think [the renaming of the tournament] gives a lot of energy to the team," he said. "We want to win it for him, in a sense."

The Vikes started well, beating the York Lions 82–66 that night.

The team was led by starting guards Chris Marsh and Reagan Daly. Marsh led all scorers with 22 points, while Daly dropped three three-pointers, including one where he tumbled and fell to the ground while shooting.

Still, first year head coach Craig Beauchamp was cautious about the victory.

"I think we were a little sloppy," he said. "It didn't seem like there was a whole lot of focus in the game."

"Seven days takes its toll when you're hanging out eating chocolates and turkey," added Daly.

UVic continued to look good the next night, trouncing the Royal Military College Paladins 81–48. The Vikes outshot their opponents, who looked more suited to rugby than basketball, throughout the game. Second year guard Steve Moore was dominant, going 7–8 from the field and four for four from beyond the arc for 18 points.

The young Vetrie appeared in the second half and used his speed well. In the final seven minutes he surprised RMC when he knocked the ball from their possession and, with the entire side of the court empty of players, ran, glanced backward once and drove the ball home.

Chris Trumpy left the game in the second half with what Coach Beaucamp later described as "a sore butt." Fortunately for the Vikes he wasn't seriously hurt and was able to return the following night.

"It was great," said guard Steve Moore after the game. "I hope we do the same for Carleton."

That wasn't the case. The Carleton Ravens, the top ranked team in the country, slaughtered UVic 51–89 on Dec. 29. The Ravens might as well have erected a police barricade around their net. Their defense tripped up the Vikes time after time. UVic shot a dismal 39 per cent from the field, a far cry from the 65 per cent they shot against RMC the night before.

Carleton had two sources of motivation. The first was their loss to UBC the night before–their first defeat against a Canadian team in two years.

The second was their coach, Dave Smart, who mercilessly barked at players like a drill sergeant, even with a 30 point lead. "What's wrong with you?" he shouted. "See the ball!" During time-outs, players huddled around him like obedient hounds.

Coach Beauchamp was understandably terse as the tournament ended.

"You need to score to stay in the game. And we didn't score," he said. "We missed shots we make more often than not."

Reagan Daly found some comfort in the loss.

"It's a learning experience," he said. "We won quite a few games leading up to this one. It's an ego check."

Eric Vetrie glances back during a breakaway against the Royal Military College Paladins on Dec. 28. The Vikes won two of three games in the seasonal tournament.

Nic Hume photos

Nathan Ashmead takes a shot against Carleton University.

NHL Canadian mid-season roundup

by Norman Ed Baskerville

Hey hockey fans and puck-heads here's your NHL Canadian franchise midseason round-up:

Calgary
Record 19–12–3–3

Leading scorer: Jarome Iginla: 12 goals, 15 assists, 27 points.

With one of the league's smallest markets, lowest payrolls, and only one established superstar, Jarome Iginla, the Flames' success has been the surprise of the 2003–2004 NHL season.

Goalie Miikka Kiprusoff has been one of the league's best all season, posting the best goals against average and save percentage in the league. Unfortunately, the red hot goalie sprained the MCL in his left knee against Minnesota on Dec. 29 and will be out of action for four to six weeks.

Losing only three games in December has optimistic Flames fans hoping the team will earn a playoff berth for the first time in seven years, while pessimistic Calgarians just hope that the second half of the season doesn't flounder like it did last year.

Edmonton
Record 15–17–7

Leading scorer: Mike York: 12 goals, 17 assists, 29 points.

The oil has dried up in Edmonton. Superstar goaltender Tommy Salo has only played half the games so far this season and is nowhere near the game-stealing net-minder he has been in previous years.

Offensively, only left winger Mike York has been tallying up goals and assists with any consistency. Dwelling near the bottom of the Western Conference standings, Edmonton has so far shown no evidence that they will climb into the playoffs.

Ottawa
Record 20–10–5–3

For the last few years Ottawa has been one of the NHL's elite teams, and this year is no different.

Right winger Marian Hossa and Captain Daniel Alfredsson are both on pace to better their career-high point totals of last season.

Goaltender Patrick Lalime is having a decent year, but the Sens will need him to be spectacular if they want to continue their balanced play into the playoffs.

Will Ottawa finally do anything in the playoffs? According to their captain they'll go all the way.

Alfredsson recently told the Ottawa Sun that his New Year's resolution is for the Senators to win the Stanley Cup.

"I strongly believe this team will do it…no question about it," he said.

Toronto
Record: 21–8–8–3

Maple Leaf fans are finally justified in their cockiness. The Leafs are the number one team in the NHL, and they've shown no signs of crumbling.

Coach Pat Quinn has somehow managed to keep this team, with some of the grittiest players in the league, from taking untimely and often vicious penalties. Owen Nolan, Gary Roberts, Tie Domi and Darcy Tucker have suddenly become the disciplined players Toronto needs them to be.

With nearly every forward contributing, the Leafs are one of the most even scoring teams in the league.

All said, if the second half of the Leaf season is anything like the first, Toronto will be the strongest Canadian competitor for the Cup.

Vancouver
Record: 22–10–6–2

The biggest criticism of the Canucks this season is that they are a one line team.

Naslund is again in the league's top five in scoring and Bertuzzi in the top 15.

The two are also second and third respectively in plus/minus, a tribute to their responsible play without the puck.

Yes, the bulk of the Canuck scoring comes from these three players, but it takes more than one line for a team to win consistently. The Canucks' supporting cast continues to do enough to keep Vancouver atop the Pacific division.

Looking prematurely to the playoffs, Vancouver is still not a true Cup contender. They let teams back into too many games after they've established a lead, and their power play, which was a thing of beauty last year, has to improve.

Montreal
Record 19–5–5–2

The most storied franchise in NHL history appears to be back on the road to competitiveness once again.

Goaltender Jose Theodre has been spectacular, allowing one or fewer goals in 15 of his 31 starts. Captain Saku Koivu is back up there with 20 points in 25 games.

However, the oft-injured Koivu suffered a concussion against the Atlanta Thrashers in a Canadiens win on Dec. 29.

The Habs are a middle of the pack team, and in the evenly stacked eastern conference they'll have to play better than .500 hockey to make the postseason.

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do sporty things!
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Billboards

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On campus

UVic Circle K Volunteers Club. Want to be part of the world's largest university/college service organization?! Circle K is all about service, leadership, fellowship, and having lots of FUN!!! Circle K is a great place to meet new people, work with children, student, adults, and seniors, and a totally awesome organization to be part of! Circle K meets every Wed. in CLE A 301 at 6 p.m. So please come join us or contact neelams@uvic.ca for more information.

Off campus

Visual art students of UVic and Camosun present "The Quality Assurance Program." Located at the Community Arts Coucil of Greater Victoria – G6 1001 Douglas St. Jan. 5 – 21. Opening reception: Friday Jan. 9th 7 – 10 p.m. with music by Connor Ferster and Rachael Wadham. For more info call 381-2787.

BLUEGRASS JAM, Tuesdays at the Orange Hall, 1620 Fernwood, 7:30 p.m. Players of all levels welcome. Players $2, listeners free. Contact: Larry Lawrence Statland 472-6483.

Learn French: Beginner and Intermediate levels Educentre is a non-profit institution fro the education of francophone adults. It offers evening French classes for adults. Winter session starting January 19th. For information on courses and schedules please call 382-1310.

Vegetarian supper – all welcome, vegetarian or not! Game night afterwards! $10 without or $3 if you bring a vegan dish. Saturday, January 10th from 6:30 – 10:00, First Met Church hall at 932 Balmoral (off Quadra, near downtown). See www.islandveg.com for more details.

Help wanted

INTERESTED IN EXTRA MONEY FOR WORK BEFORE AND AFTER CLASSES? Seeking a responsible, compassionate and enthusiastic student to help out in child care, including dropping off and picking up from school near the UVic district. Some flexibility in days, with hours generally from 7:30 – 9:00 am and 2:00 – 4:30 pm. $10 per hour plus gas money. Please contact 472-8186 evenings.

TEACH ENGLISH Overseas: Jobs $$ Guaranteed – Great Pay. TESOL Certified in 5 days in-class (monthly classes), on-line or by correspondence. **FREE** Information Seminar, every Monday @ 7 p.m. Bedford Regency, 1140 Government St. **FREE** Infopack: **1-888-270-2941** or **globaltesol.com**

Volunteers wanted to act as conversation partners and activity leaders for international students. If interested, please send résumé or personal statement to cathy@cdncollege.bc.ca or fax 383-2292.

Accommodations

PINEWOOD ESTATES TOWNHOUSES X-tra large 3BR townhouses. Now & February 1st, 2004 3 levels incl. office + rec room. 5 appls. Walk to UVic. $1390
Call Barb @ 812-4402.

Announcements

Be a director. Meeting January 13th, 7 p.m. The Victoria Cancer Resource Society. Call Dr. Kinarthy, Ph.D. 382-2465.

JOIN A RESEARCH STUDY on **young women's identity development for women who have experienced maternal loss.** Women volunteers are needed to participate in a reseach study to explore the experience of self-discovery in young women who have loss of their mother. This research is being conducted as part of the researcher's master's thesis at the University of Victoria. As a participant you will be requested to complete 2 interviews about your experience of maternal loss and self-discovery. Your confidentiality will be strictly protected.
Women are needed for this study who:
Would like to share their story in a study that that facilitate greater understanding of women who have lost their mothers;
Are between 20 and 26 years of age;
Were raised in intact families;
Experienced the death of their mother due to accident or illness (not suicide) between the ages of 11 and 18.

WILDERNESS SCAVENGER HUNT come join us to search for clues and win fabulous prizes! Friday January 16th, 2004 12:30 p.m. UVic fountain (rain or shine) for information e-mail uvicwilderness@yahoo.ca.

Centre for Studies in Religion and Society: Graduate Student Fellowship Opportunities
The Ian H. Stewart Graduate Student Fellowship and the Vandekerkhove Family Trust Graduate Student Fellowships. To apply for either fellowship applications should be submitted to the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society by February 1, 2004. For details please visit web.uvic.ca/csrs/ or call 721-6695.

Calling all groovesters!
Groovefest is an annual fundraiser that deconstructs valentine's day and mainstream beauty standards by celebrating sexuality, diversity and resistance. It's an anti-fashion show, an outlaw talent show, and a radical variety show. Groovefest needs a diverse group of volunteers, performers and models. In particular, we're looking for people of colour, aboriginal people, people of size, transgendered people, people with disabilities and queer people who want to get involved. If you're interested, please contact rubina or danielle at the women's centre (sub b107). Call 721-8353 or e-mail groovefest@riseup.net Get aboard the good ship groove!

For sale

'89 Fox Volkswagon for sale $500 479-6058.

Wanted

Musician wanted: looking for a trumpet player for an upcoming performance. Please contact Conrad at cgustafson@telus.net or 477-3480.

Used teaching ESL texts. University of Havana, Cuba needs them for its English Language Profs. Can you help? tedhaymond@telus.net or (250) 743-1744 Mill Bay.

For hire

ESL? Need help w/assignments? Help w/grammar, etc. $12/hr. Call 415-0515 and ask for Jordan.

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Hey you!

Hey asshole with the rollerblades: it's not a personal dislike, it's a safety issue. Take off the fucking rollerblades while in the SUB or I'll make your life hell next time.
Lindsey

What's a five letter word for "the opposite of dry"?

Rick, you left your shirt, the grey one with the broken heart on it. Were you offering me a sample of your pheromones? Too bad I only liked you for your occasional elegant-metaphors and startling psychological insights. Otherwise I'd be sniffing that shirt like a dog in heat.
Shelly

Happy Birthday Libbie/Zoe's Mom – I hope this makes you smile as much as our serenading did.

I may not be a stranger, but I sure would like to give you some candy. Sweet sweet candy.

Richard: love in the reeds beckons. May our east-coast adventure herald much frolicsome follies and hot sweaty love. I promise not to cry out Henwen's name during the throes of passion.

What's the word for that moment when you're dancing in the snow and you decide you have to take off your clothes so that you can dance better?

Billboard Rates:

Students and Clubs – $2/issue
Non-Students – $2/line
Businesses – $5.50/line for first 3 lines
+ $2/extra line
hey you! – free

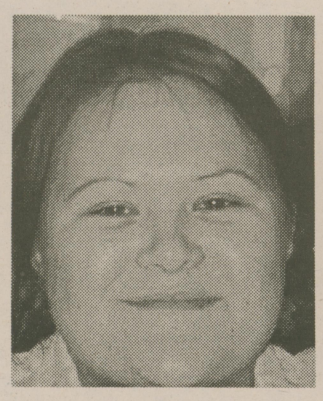
on the spot

Today's Question:
Are you for or against the snow?

Sculpted from glaciers by Graham Stark
photos by Tim Hanson.

Teri Robinson

TR: Definitely for. It's a nice change. I was in 47 °C heat in Italy this summer. In fact, I'd like *more* snow.

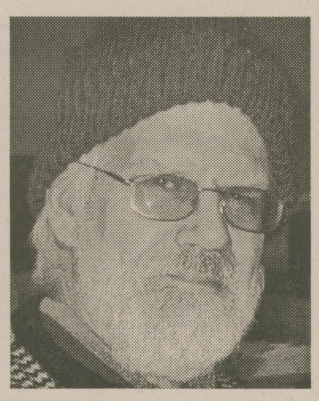


Justine Shore

JS: I would say that I am for it. It's a big hassle for some and everyone's having trouble, but they need to relax and enjoy it.

Jude Coates
UVSS Board of Directors, Chair

JC: I'm against this provincial government *snowballing* us with their misleading rhetoric.



Bill Lewis

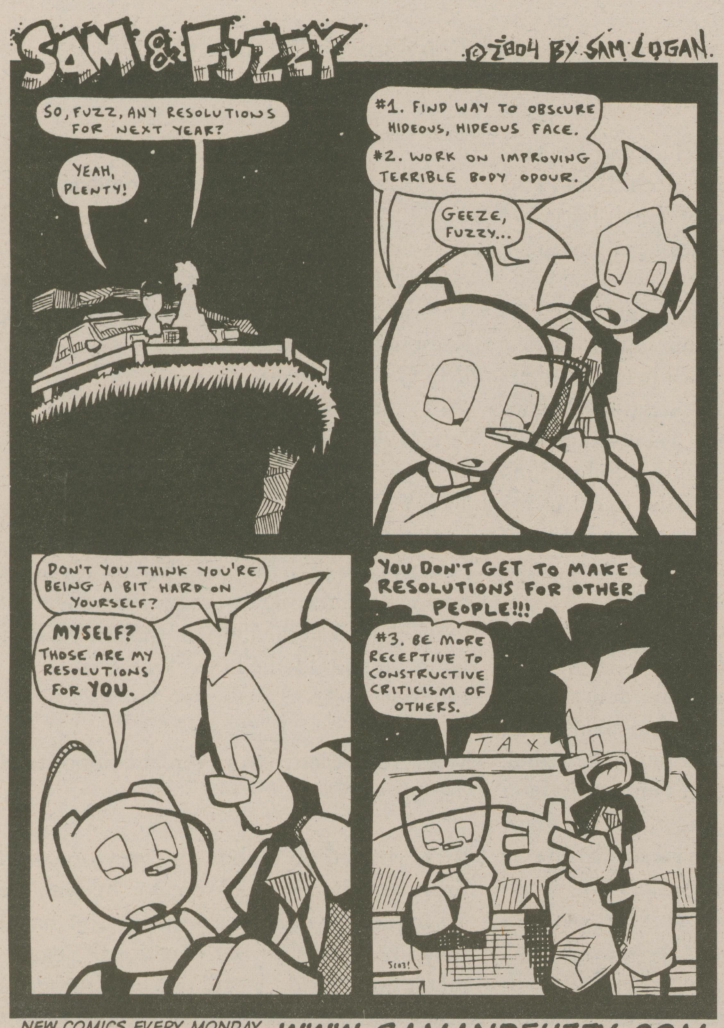
BL: I'm for it!
GS: Why?
BL: It slows me down.

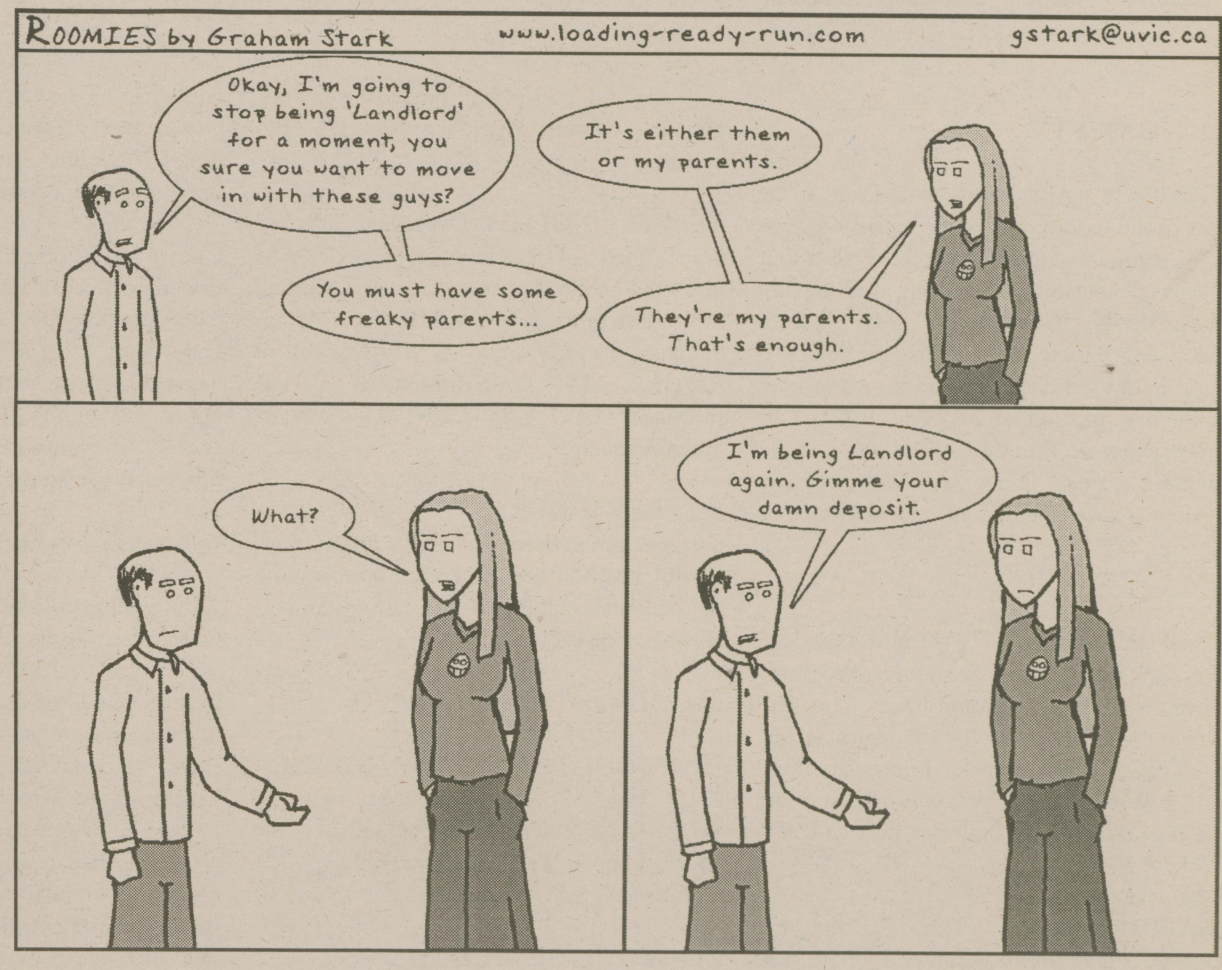
Emily Sandwith

ES: Well, I'm not too keen on driving in it, but it's fun. Why aren't you asking people inside?
GS: Because I hate myself.

Brian Wanger
BC Transit Driver

BW: Absolutely for it! 300 per cent!
GS: Have you been negatively affected by it at all?
BW: *I* haven't. Some parts of transit have, but *I've* been on schedule.


SAM & FUZZY
©2004 BY SAM LOGAN.
SO, FUZZ, ANY RESOLUTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR?
YEAH, PLENTY!
#1. FIND WAY TO OBSCURE HIDEOUS, HIDEOUS FACE.
#2. WORK ON IMPROVING TERRIBLE BODY ODOUR.
GEEZE, FUZZY...
DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE BEING A BIT HARD ON YOURSELF?
MYSELF? THOSE ARE MY RESOLUTIONS FOR YOU.
YOU DON'T GET TO MAKE RESOLUTIONS FOR OTHER PEOPLE!!!
#3. BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OF OTHERS.
TAX
NEW COMICS EVERY MONDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY AT: WWW.SAMANDFUZZY.COM

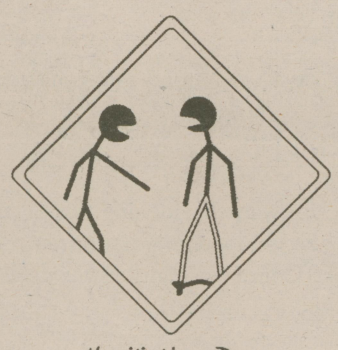

ROOMIES by Graham Stark
www.loading-ready-run.com
gstark@uvic.ca
Okay, I'm going to stop being 'Landlord' for a moment, you sure you want to move in with these guys?
You must have some freaky parents...
It's either them or my parents.
They're my parents. That's enough.
What?
I'm being Landlord again. Gimme your damn deposit.

Some Interesting January Holidays (No, seriously. They're real.) by Graham Stark

January 1

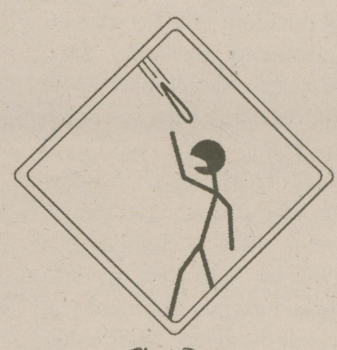
New Years Day

January 3



Humiliation Day

January 5

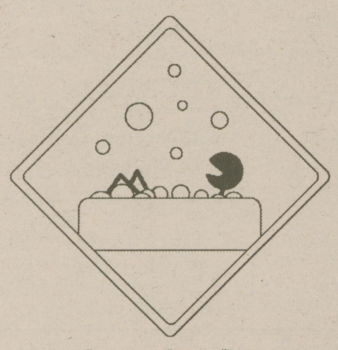


Bird Day

January 6

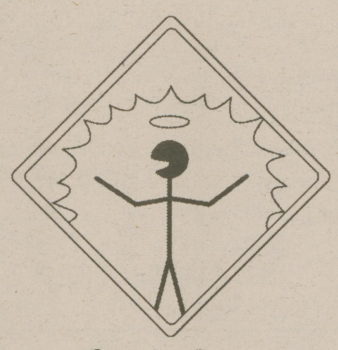
Bean Day

January 8



Bubble Bath Day

January 9



Play God Day

January 10

Peculiar People Day

January 11

Step in a Puddle and Splash Your Friends Day

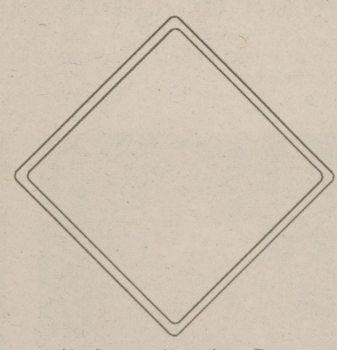
January 13

Blame Someone Else Day

January 14

Dress Up Your Pet Day

January 15



National Nothing Day

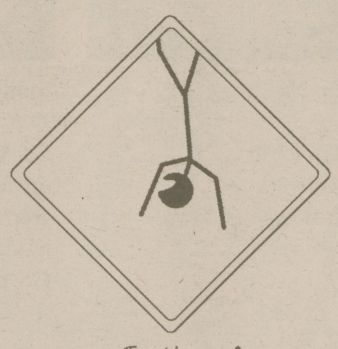
January 19

Penguin Awareness Day

January 21

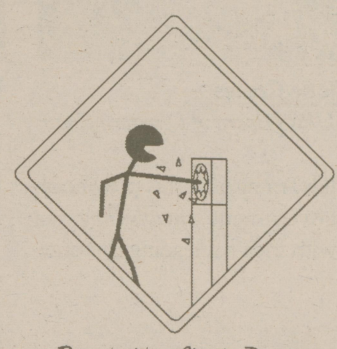
National Hugging Day

January 25



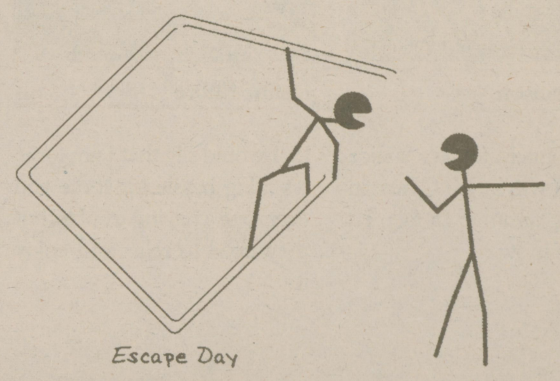
Opposite Day

January 27



Punch the Clock Day

January 30



Escape Day